PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 222

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
29 March—16 April 1993

£90 net

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. JOHN MAJOR, MP, APRIL 1992)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
The Rt. Hon. Tristan Garel-Jones, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—David Curry, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Housing, Planning and Construction—Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—John Redwood, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Maclean, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Michael Mates, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—David Curry, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Earl Howe
The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Lord Cecil of Essenden

Education—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCHOOLS—Eric Forth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION—Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP
The Viscount Ullswater

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Housing, Planning and Construction—Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—John Redwood, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Maclean, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Strathclyde
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
Robin Squire, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Right Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
The Rt. Hon. Tristan Garel-Jones, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Tim Yeo, Esq, MP
The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Charles Wardle, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—John M. Taylor, Esq, MP

National Heritage—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robert Key, Esq, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Michael Mates, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Earl of Arran
Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham

Public Service and Science, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Robert Jackson, Esq, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
Sir Hector Monro, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP
Alistair Burt, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TECHNOLOGY—Edward Leigh, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND SMALL FIRMS—The Baroness Denton, CBE

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Kenneth Carlisle, Esq, MP (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Steve Norris, Esq, MP (Minister for Transport in London)

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Greg Knight, Esq, MP
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
David Davis, Esq, MP
Andrew Mackay, Esq, MP
Robert G. Hughes, Esq, MP
James Arbuthnot, Esq, MP
Andrew Mitchell, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Gwilym Jones, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Somerleyton
TREASURER—David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hesketh
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, CBE, The Viscount Astor, The Viscount St. Davids, The Viscount Goschen
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Trumpington

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Michael Morris, Esq, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Dame Janet Fookes, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Robert Adley, Esq, MP, Dr. John G. Blackburn, MP, Joe Benton, Esq, MP, Frank Cook, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Alan Haselhurst, Esq, MP, Robert Hicks, Esq, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, Barry Jones, Esq, MP, Martyn Jones, Esq, MP, Sir James Kilfedder, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, Iain Mills, Esq, MP, Edward O'Hara, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Roger Sims, Esq, MP, Mrs. Ann Winterton, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett, MP, The Rt. Hon. Alan Beith, MP, The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP, The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP, The Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—R. W. G. Wilson

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, D. J. T. Englefield, J. Rodda, FCA, I. D. Church, Mrs. S. J. Harrison

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—Sir Peter Kitcatt, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Mrs. M. E. Thomson

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, T. J. G. Pratt

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Ms. P. A. Helme

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon, CB

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
- W. R. McKay (Public Bills)
- C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
- R. B. Sands (Select Committees)
- G. Cubie (Overseas Office)
- A. J. Hastings (Journal Office)
- R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
- D. G. Millar (Select Committees)
- M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)
- R. W. G. Wilson (Domestic Committees)
- W. A. Proctor (Financial Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, L. C. Laurence Smyth, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James

SENIOR CLERKS—Ms. P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, DPhil, Miss E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, J. M. Hope (acting), H. R. Neilson (acting), D. Steel (acting), D. J. Clarke (acting)

CLERKS OF DOMESTIC COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown, P. G. Moon

ASSISTANT CLERKS—A. Y. A. Azad, C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher, Ms. L. M. Gardner, F. J. Reid, M. Hennessy, G. R. Devine

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, S. D. Barrett

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Ms. C. M. Genis, Mrs. C. Oxborough, R. W. A. Barrand

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD, A. J. Wood, Miss C. M. French, Ms. C. L. Auchterlonie, Miss J. Towns, C. B. Dibben, J. Cable

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—B. Tidball, DEPUTY—Miss L. Lewis, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack, P. L. J. Sullivan

SECRETARIES—Mrs. G. E. C. Sclater (Clerk of the House), Mrs. S. D. Pamphlett, Miss S. P. Chubb, Mrs. D. Gent, Miss A. T. Power, Miss D. J. Somers, Mrs. K. J. Georgiou, Mrs. S. A. Carrino, Miss L. Young, Mrs. H. Agnew, Miss S. Littlebury, Mrs. J. Stott, Mrs. A. M. Douglas, Miss K. McClelland, Mrs. B. Hunter (temporary)

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. B. Sands

TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERVISOR OF PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING—J. F. Grist (temporary)

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR (BROADCASTING)—R. Longman, OBE (temporary)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss A. Fuki, J. Hole, Miss E. Segal, A. Catinella, Mrs. D. B. Nelson, Miss C. A. Benger

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPERS—C. E. Gray, J. C. W. Cooper

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, D. Shiels, J. Town, R. J. McClelland, R. J. Tyack

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, K. R. Dickason, C. R. Harris, BEM

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER—Mrs. M. Mainland

NURSING SISTER—Miss S. Todd

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS DIRECTORATE—

DIRECTOR OF WORKS—H. P. Webber

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF WORKS—B. C. Sewell

PRINCIPAL WORKS OFFICERS—A. Makepeace, R. Bentley, G. Goode, B. R. Hall, C. Hillier, M. Moone, J.F. Moore, M. Trott

SENIOR PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL OFFICERS—C. Brown, C. Cowell, J. Eaton, T. Fox, S. Howard, T. Jardine, B. O'Boyle, J. Stone

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—Miss J. B. Canfield
LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—S. Z. Young, Miss P. J. Baines, B.Litt
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick
LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Ms. C. E. Nield, R. J. Twigger, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, CStat, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss B. McInnes, B. K. Winetrobe, Miss M. Baber, Ms. A. Walker, Mrs. H. V. Holden, Mrs. G. L. Allen, Mrs. P. Carling, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, A. J. L. Crompton, Mrs. K. Greener, Miss P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms H. M. Jeffs, S. A. Wise (period)
ASSISTANT—R. S. Dewdney, Dr. A. Davies, Ms. W. T. Wilson, E. H. Wood, Miss N. J. Chedgey, M. Nawaz, P. Bowers, PhD, M. P. Hillyard, T. E. Dodd, A. C. Seely, Ms. J. K. Dyson, Miss. F. M. Watson, G. Danby, PhD, W. F. Lea, Miss P. M. Hughes, PhD
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. P. A. Ball, P. W. Skerratt (period), J. A. Prince, MLS (acting)
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss I. O. White, ALA, C. Haig (acting)
EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds; ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—E. L. V. MacGregor, Ms. B. A. Rowlands, ALA, J. P Brevitt
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Ms. F. Whittle, T. C. Holmes, C. M. Sear, Ms. J. B. Hall, ALA, R. Freebury, ALA, A. D. Parker, ALA, Ms. Z. A. Smallwood (acting), Miss C. M. A. Chambers (acting)
EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—D. B. Inns
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, ALA, Miss C. Owens, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA, Miss D. J. Gillings, Miss L. K. Fleming, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss P. Rix, Miss S. Pepin, ALA, P. C. Tomes, R. O. Steeden, G. G. Newell, Miss A. Hatton, Miss V. S. Spratt, B. Smith (acting)
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), Ms. J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, A. Clark, Miss A. Gual, Mrs. S. P. Sinclair, Ms. M A. Moulton, Miss N. M. Sutherland, Miss K. E. Susilovic, Mrs. C. Millar, Mrs. P. M. Burnett, F. M. Codd (acting)

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE— ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
BOOKSHOP MANAGER—C. D. Lister HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—B. G. Underwood
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, A. J. Ashton
VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington, M. D. Cook

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR—J. Rodda, FCA

FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. Fletcher, Mrs. G. Crowther
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. D. C. Hill, N. P. Crawley HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. J. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms. M. R. Morris, G. L. Turner EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, Ms. P. R. Mills, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss T. D. Ruewell, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers, R. A. P. Edwards, Mrs. C. J. Stockton, A. C. Martin

FINANCE OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—M. J. Barram, IPFA, MBCS,
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—Miss M. M. McColl, R. H. A. Russell, ACMA
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. N. Norman, Ms. S. Peterson, IPFA (secondment)
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—P. McGuiness, Ms. K. Bigwood EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, P. F. Dawson, C. J. Bumstead, Miss V. E. Wilson, Miss D. O. McElderry, P. Barratt (temporary), Miss V. Browne (temporary)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss P. J. Hurford HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—M. Page
PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—Miss J. Bremner
PERSONNEL OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson, Mrs. R. A. Baker, Mrs. A. McGuinn

COMPUTER OFFICE—
COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc NETWORK PLANNING OFFICER—J. Fishenden
NETWORK SUPPORT OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland COMPUTER SUPPORT MANAGER—Miss M. Morrison

COMMON SERVICES UNIT—
HEAD OF UNIT—V. H. Stocker HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell
INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron SENIOR AUDITOR—S. J. Lewis
STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins
WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, W. G. Garland, Miss H. A. Hales

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Ms. C. V. Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson, C. Fogarty

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss V. A. Widgery, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Miss M. Babington, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms. G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Ms. K. Stewart, J. Ransley, Mrs. E. J. Gregory

REPORTERS—Miss E. Morris, Ms. J. Dall, Ms. P. Kelly, Miss K. Myers, Ms. J. Warrington, Ms. D. Jones, Mrs. J. Symons, Mrs. J. L. Davies, Miss E. A. Jarka

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. Beck (acting)

IT MANAGER—Miss J. L. Brown

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Mrs. S. J. Harrison, MHCIMA

OPERATIONS MANAGER—N. M. Hutson, MHCIMA

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay, MBE

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

CATERING MANAGER, HOUSE OF COMMONS—P. Gale, MHCIMA

CATERING MANAGER, BELLAMY'S—Ms. S. Hovells, LHCIMA

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

ASSISTANT BANQUETING MANAGER—

ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER—M. W. E. Johnson

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE CHEF—S. Norris

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. E. F. Longhurst, LVO

DEPUTY HEAD OF SECURITY—Superintendent R. J. Warne

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. S. Morrison

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 222**

SIXTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 29 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the average unemployment rates for each of the travel-to-work areas in Gwynedd during each of the last three years.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): With permission, Madam Speaker, I will arrange for the figures to be published in the *Official Report*.

Average unemployment rates for TTWAs in Gwynedd for the last three years are as follows:

Travel-to-work areas in Gwynedd—unemployment

TTWA	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Bangor and Caernarfon	8·4	9·9	11·4
Conwy and Colwyn[1]	5·9	7·4	9·1
Dolgellau and Barmouth	5·5	7·7	8·8
Holyhead	10·1	12·5	14·5
Machynlleth[1]	4·1	6·4	7·6
Porthmadog and Ffestiniog	5·7	8·1	9·4
Pwllheli	7·2	8·9	9·8

Source: Department of Employment.
[1] These TTWAs are only partly within the county.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister of State aware that one of the supranational companies that have been seeking a location in Ynys Môn or Arfon has delayed its investment decision because of uncertainty? Is he also aware that many supranational companies that aim to sell their products to the European Community are uneasy because of the delay in getting the Maastricht Bill on to the statute book? Will he impress on Back Benchers of all parties who supported the Bill at the general election a year ago the need to get it on to the statute book so that we do not lose vital jobs?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I wholly agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is vital that we get the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on the statute book, and especially vital for Wales. There is no doubt in our minds that most of the inward investment that we have secured for Wales—and we have done pretty well—has been because inward investors have one eye on the European market.

Mr. Ron Davies: If the figures are anything like the Welsh average, they will be completely unacceptable. In any event, do not they prove, among other things, that there is not much benefit to the people of Wales in doing deals to keep the Tory Government in office?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten the fact that unemployment came down in Wales last month by no fewer than 1,400, and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) the decline was 228, one of the largest constituency declines in Wales. We have had a good Budget for sustainable growth. There is confidence in Wales, and we are looking forward to growth and to Wales leading in that growth.

Mr. Sweeney: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Bosch is closing its alternator plant in Stuttgart and doubling production at the plant in Llantrisant? Is not that good news for the Welsh economy, which will——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a very limited question dealing with a particular travel-to-work area.

2. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the male population aged 16 to 64 years is classified as economically inactive *(a)* in the south Wales valleys *(b)* in Wales as a whole and *(c)* in Britain.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): According to the latest census, the figures are 22·8 per cent., 18·8 per cent. and 13·4 per cent., respectively.

Mr. Williams: Does the Secretary of State realise that in a recent league table based on the 1991 census, of the 55 counties of England and Wales the four with the highest levels of economic inactivity are all Welsh: Mid Glamorgan, West Glamorgan, Gwent and Dyfed? Does the Secretary of State agree that levels of economic inactivity are a very good index of deprivation, more so than unemployment or even the rise in unemployment? In redrawing the assisted area map, would not it be perverse if funds were redirected to the south-east of England, with its underlying prosperity? Will he fight to ensure that, at the very least, Wales maintains its existing assisted area status?

Mr. Hunt: Of course we must ensure that Wales is treated properly in the assisted area review, which is taking place at present. The consultation period is over, and Ministers are now considering such issues.

The hon. Gentleman is right. Activity rates are an important indicator, in particular in pointing to the transformation that has taken place in Wales, with the decline of its dependence on industries such as coal and steel. As for the future, it must be a good sign that unemployment rates in Wales have been below the United Kingdom average for six consecutive months.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that economic inactivity rates are no guide to the level of unemployment because they include those in further and higher education? Under this Government, there are more people in further and higher education. Will my right hon. Friend always make the point that economic activity includes that aspect as well?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend that we have seen a level of activity in Wales which takes into account a range of issues. He is right to point out the reasons for the higher level of inactivity.

Mr. Ron Davies: Given the undoubted high levels of economic inactivity in Wales, can the Secretary of State explain why he is so deliberately undermining the finances of the Welsh Development Agency? Does not he understand that the cut of £30 million in the Welsh Office grant from the last financial year to the next financial year, coupled with the enforced selling of property assets, is creating a black hole in the WDA budget? Is not the Secretary of State attempting privatisation by stealth and forcing the Welsh Development Agency to make decisions that are wholly inconsistent with its job as a development agency? Does not he realise that the proper role of the WDA is not to make profits by charging high rents and by selling assets, but to encourage development by strategic investment and by good estate management?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has failed to recognise that in the coming financial year, the gross budget of the Welsh Development Agency will be at its highest level ever in cash and in real terms. I make three further points. First, the hon. Gentleman could do the Welsh Development Agency a great deal of good by having a word with his hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) who never ceases to take an opportunity to run down the achievements of the WDA. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman should have well in mind the words of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about the importance of Europe and of Maastricht. The hon. Gentleman has failed to address that point and he does so at his peril. Thirdly, I am happy to confirm today—I am sad that the hon. Gentleman has not mentioned this—that there is a package of 51 projects by small and medium-sized companies involving a total investment of almost £9·5 million and 690 safeguarded and new jobs. It is time that the hon. Gentleman started talking up Wales instead of giving a constant message of misery.

Mr. Richards: Will my right Hon. Friend join me in welcoming the decision by the President of the Board of Trade to give the Connah's Quay power station the go-ahead, thereby reducing the level of economic inactivity in north Wales by several thousand? Does he further agree that if the Opposition are truly interested in bringing down the level of unemployment in Wales, they will vote with the Government for the White Paper tonight?

Mr. Hunt: If the Opposition were really interested in economic growth in Wales, they would support the Maastricht treaty and the whole issue of Europe. If they were really interested in economic growth in north Wales, they would not table an amendment, as they have for today's debate, which would spell the death knell of the Connah's Quay power station development. It will be interesting to see how many Opposition Members go through the Lobby tonight in support of the amendment which would destroy the jobs at Connah's Quay.

Assisted Areas

3. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the need to provide full assisted area status for the Llanelli travel-to-work area.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have received a number of representations about the Llanelli travel-to-work area. Some request that Llanelli be upgraded to development area status whereas others seek to maintain the status quo.

Mr. Davies: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it was probably an error some years ago to reduce Llanelli's status to intermediate status? Is he aware—I am sure that he is—that we have high rates of unemployment and very low rates of economic activity, which are getting even lower? We are at the far end of the M4 corridor. South-west Wales, unlike Ireland, Spain Portugal and Greece, gets nothing out of the Maastricht treaty. Will the Secretary of State and the Government, therefore, make a decision soon to restore full assisted area status?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman will know that all factors mentioned in the June consultative paper are being taken into account. We had to await the outcome of the coal review, and our proposals will of course have to be cleared by the European Commission. I am aware of some of the disadvantages of the Llanelli travel-to-work area, but I am glad to tell the right hon. Gentleman that unemployment also decreased in his constituency last

month. We are improving the M4, and I am sure that he would be the first to agree that the completion of the Baglan to Lon-las section will help considerably in bringing inward investment to his constituency.

Government in Wales

4. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had about the future of government in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): My right hon. Friend had extensive consultations before he published his White Paper on local government reorganisation in Wales and he is now seeking views on the future of the Welsh Grand Committee.

Mr. Hain: But does the Minister agree that the Government are standing like King Canute in front of a tidal wave of opinion in Wales in favour of an elected Welsh assembly, and that no seedy deals with the nationalists will buy off that opinion? Does he realise that, although Plaid Cymru may be willing to accept a few pathetic little appointments from the Tories, both it and its new Tory partners will be swept aside in the county council elections by Labour candidates favouring an elected Welsh assembly, the restoration of local government powers and democracy and an end to undemocratic quangos?

Mr. Jones: I know that the hon. Gentleman has been marching leftward in his life, but he will be aware of the celebrations that are taking place as yet another country rejects socialism. Faced with the march of progress, he will have to disabuse himself of the dream that a Welsh assembly might be a last refuge for the Labour party.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, in the referendum in Wales in 1979, some 85 per cent. of the Welsh electorate voted against an elected Welsh assembly, and that one of the leading campaigners against it was the immediate past Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A Welsh assembly has been overwhelmingly rejected by the people of Wales. I remember the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) saying that, as long as he was active in political life, for the rest of that political life he would campaign against such a Welsh assembly.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Is not it absolutely clear that, if Wales is truly to take her place at the heart of Europe, we must secure a legislative parliament for Wales similar to those already secured by the small nations and historic regions of Europe? Do the Government understand that, as distinct from the Labour party, which wants a second-rate assembly or regional council—though it does want a Parliament for Scotland—we in Wales want real democracy?

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is here, at the Dispatch Box of the House of Commons, that we have real democracy. The future for the Principality of Wales lies here, not with any of the half-baked ideas of which we have been hearing. As the hon. Gentleman says, the Labour party cannot even come clean on exactly what it has in mind.

Mr. Murphy: Does not the Minister realise that, as the majority of the Welsh people voted Labour last year, as all the Welsh Euro MPs are Labour, as the vast majority of Wales's Westminster MPs are Labour and as the majority of councillors are Labour, any proposal to set up a so-called Welsh forum without the involvement of the Labour party is nothing more than a meaningless and empty gesture? Does not he accept that the House is waiting with great interest—it would be courteous if he told the House—to hear what are the arrangements and what is the deal between the Government and the Welsh nationalist party? We have a right to know.

Mr. Jones: As we have said, we are seeking views on the future of the Welsh Grand Committee, and the hon. Gentleman would be most welcome to come forward and give his views on that. We look forward to hearing from him.

Primary Schools

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79 at constant prices.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Expenditure per pupil in primary schools was £1,398 in 1990-91, compared with £1,038 in 1978-79 on the same price basis. This represents an increase of 34·7 per cent.

Mr. Knox: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that sufficient money is being delegated to schools in Wales?

Sir Wyn Roberts: No, we are not satisfied that local education authorities are delegating sufficient moneys to schools in Wales. However, from this April, at least 85 per cent. of the potential schools budget must be delegated to schools, with at least 80 per cent. of the aggregated schools budget delegated on the basis of pupil numbers weighted for age.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the right hon. Gentleman clearly affirm his own and his Department's commitment to the retention of village primary schools in rural Wales, notwithstanding the fact that on a cost-per-child basis, they sometimes cost a little more than urban or area schools?

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have made special allowances for rural schools in sparsely populated areas in the local management of schools formula. I am very glad that the hon. and learned Gentleman's local education authority, Powys, is contemplating the delegation of as much as 95 per cent. of the potential schools budget to local schools.

NHS Trusts and GP Fund Holders

6. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many NHS trusts and fund-holding general practitioner practices have been set up in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: From Thursday of this week, there will be 14 national health service trusts in Wales and 74 general practitioner fund holders.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer which reveals a large increase, on 1 April, on last year's figures. Is the experience in Wales similar to that in Dorset, where people of all political parties and none are now coming together to say that trust hospitals are a success?

Is that the experience in the Principality? Will my hon. Friend be able to come to the Dispatch Box soon and tell us that there are 100 per cent. trust hospitals in Wales, as there are in Dorset?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is right. The expansion is significant. We have only one NHS trust at the moment, but there will be 14 on Thursday and 48 more GP fund holders. That is real progress and real devolution in respect of taking decision making as close as possible to patients. About two thirds of the NHS in Wales will be in trust status and I look to the further progress that that will represent.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: With regard to GP fund holders, what criteria will they use when rationing, so that their patients know exactly how such decisions are made?

Mr. Jones: I do not think that that question applies, because there is no question of rationing. The constant scares that fund-holders will somehow run out of money are not correct. That will not happen. If there were to be any deterioration in respect of the situation of a GP fund holder, the fund-holding situation would be withdrawn in the interests of the patient.

Police

7. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the subject of reorganisation of Welsh police forces and overall control of them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Several, but this is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Llwyd: In the light of the recent review announced by the Home Secretary, will the Secretary of State confirm the need to ensure local control and accountability of Welsh police forces? Will he also confirm that, if it were offered, he would support overall control of Welsh policing being transferred to the Welsh Office?

Mr. Hunt: On the first point, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already told the House of his intention that half the membership of the new police authorities should be locally elected members. He will be dealing with the details of the constitution and functions of the police authorities in his White Paper later this year.

With regard to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, that matter is always kept under review. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is always looking at the whole question of devolution of further powers to Wales. Indeed, training matters were transferred to Wales last year. Next week, the university of Wales, higher education and the arts will transfer to Cardiff from Whitehall.

Mr. Roger Evans: Will my right hon. Friend note, and convey to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, the degree of concern in Gwent at initial suggestions that the Gwent constabulary might be singled out for amalgamation purely on grounds of size? That force has an excellent record and there are many similar-sized police forces, such as those in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset, which also have happier records than some of the larger forces in metropolitan English areas.

Mr. Hunt: I am impressed with all that I have seen of the Gwent constabulary. As my hon. Friend knows, I recently visited the Gwent constabulary. I am impressed with the way in which it conducts policing. As my right hon. and learned Friend made absolutely clear in his statement to the House, we are moving away from the consideration of any question of structure and amalgamations and concentrating on the more efficient policing policies. Those policies will be made clear to the House when my right hon. and learned Friend publishes his White Paper later this year.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Can the Secretary of State confirm that the intense speculation that the number of police forces in Wales would be reduced from four to three will not go ahead? Is not it absurd that it was even mooted to do so without this being under his direction?

Mr. Hunt: I was concerned at some of the stories that I was reading in the press which bore no relation to discussions going on within government. I was, therefore, pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made it absolutely clear that there was no substance to the stories and that the most important thing is to concentrate on the ways in which policing in Wales can be made more efficient and more effective.

Local Government Boundaries

8. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the representations he has received concerning his proposal to remove the communities of Coychurch Lower, Ewenny, Saint Bride's Major and Wide from Ogwr and place them in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since 1 March, we have received 44 representations about the proposal to transfer those communities to a Vale of Glamorgan authority.

Mr. Griffiths: Is not it true that the vast majority of the communities have made it clear that they totally oppose the transfer of Saint Bride's Major, Coychurch Lower, Ewenny and Wide into the Vale of Glamorgan? After all, those communities are part of the natural hinterland of Bridgend. They are in the Bridgend travel-to-work area and have an existing loyalty to that area.

Can the Minister instruct his civil servant, who is replying to letters from my constituents, to cross out the concluding sentence of the letter in which he makes a claim which is not true—that the Vale of Glamorgan is more used to dealing with small rural communities than is the Ogwr borough? In communities with under 4,000, it is 10:7 in favour of Ogwr and in communities with under 3,500, it is 9:7 in favour of Ogwr. If one looks at the size of Saint Bride's Major, which is the biggest community council, one sees that six communities in Ogwr have a population that is less than that of Saint Bride's Major—only two are in the Vale of Glamorgan. What the civil servant says is totally untrue. I hope that the Minister will listen to the representations from my constituents.

Mr. Jones: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will certainly listen to representations about any points of detail. The Boundary Commission is to examine boundaries after the legislation is in place to see whether there are any anomalies. I do not accept the fundamental premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. Essentially, these communities are geographically and socially part of

the Vale of Glamorgan and I suggest that it would be more appropriate for them to be part of a Vale of Glamorgan authority.

Mr. Sweeney: Is my hon. Friend aware that, before the issue of the White Paper, the Vale of Glamorgan borough council made a suggestion to Ogwr that a joint survey be commissioned to produce an independent result of opinion in the communities in question but that that was rejected by Ogwr, greatly to the disappointment of those in the Vale of Glamorgan who overwhelmingly support the inclusion of those areas in the vale?

Mr. Jones: I am sure that my hon. Friend makes an important point in the matter of independent consultation. I am aware that he is in tune with communities such as these four from his representation of the Vale of Glamorgan.

9. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline the reasons for proposing a unitary authority based on Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, together with the community areas of Rhymney, Darran Valley and New Tredegar.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The proposed Heads of the Valleys authority brings together communities that have a similar social, economic and cultural heritage. A unitary authority for the area, by building on the strengths of all its component parts, will provide the effective local government which is needed to deal with its social and economic problems.

Mr. Smith: Under the proposal for the new Heads of the Valley unitary authority, could the Minister give more details about the community links between Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr? Can he tell me the time that it would take to get from Swffryd in the south of Blaenau Gwent to Merthyr Tydfil by travelling on public transport? Of all those people who submitted evidence—I believe that the evidence is now in the Library—can he tell me how many people and who submitted evidence supporting a unitary authority based on the heads of the valley proposal?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received a total of 252 representations, often conflicting, about possible boundaries for authorities in the valleys. I visited Blaenau Gwent on 19 March and talked to councillors there. I am well aware of their anxiety to remain an authority on their own. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the population of the area has fallen. In 1971, it was about 85,700 and by 1991 it was down to 76,900. It is very important that we should create a unitary authority which is viable.

When I travelled from Tredegar to Ebbw Vale I noted that we went by the Heads of the Valleys road. Only a little further along that road is Merthyr.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that on the journey between Tredegar and Ebbw Vale he went past a monument located in the constituency of the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith)? It is three stones which commemorate Aneurin Bevan, who represented the area for 30 years. The three stones represent the communities of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale and Rhymney—three areas to be brought together under the proposals of my hon. Friend.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I certainly noted that memorial to the late Aneurin Bevan. Indeed, I am so long in the tooth that I remember going to hear the declaration of his result in a general election, which Gaitskell conceded. Nye Bevan said:

"I shall not concede victory until the last ballot box is opened."

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Member did not include Merthyr Tydfil in his list. I have not yet found an individual or representative organisation in my constituency which supports the Minister's proposal. I noticed that he was quiet about the 250 people and organisations who have written to him. Which one or more of them supports the principle of a Heads of the Valleys authority as proposed by the Government?

Sir Wyn Roberts: A Heads of the Valleys authority makes a great deal of sense for the main reason that I gave —that Merthyr and Blaenau Gwent have a similar economic and social history. I am sure that if Merthyr had been included in Nye Bevan's constituency, it would have been proud of him and of the constituency.

Labour Statistics

10. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for male unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures are 6,234, 17,307 and 107,900 respectively.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that in recent weeks Newport has suffered two severe blows: first, the loss of the Marconi factory and 400 high-tech jobs and, secondly, his decision to authorise a waste disposal plant at Newport to be run by a dubious American company which will do considerable harm to the old image of the town? Why does not he listen to the views of the people of Newport on the matter? I assure him that, if he did, his stock would be far higher than it is at present.

Mr. Hunt: Inviting though that challenge is, I point the hon. Gentleman to the facts. Some years ago 5,424 people were unemployed in his constituency. That figure has now fallen to 4,020. In view of the record level of inward investment and of inward investment projects, combined with regional selective assistance projects, I am hopeful that many hundreds and thousands of jobs will come to Wales during 1993. That should prove to be good news for the whole of south Wales and his area in particular.

Mr. Dafis: May I remind the Secretary of State that it is two months since the meeting at which we discussed the report of the west Wales task force—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Would the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) please resume his seat for a moment? If hon. Members have any complaints to make perhaps they would do so through a substantive motion which I can see and ensure is debated in the House.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I take points of order at the end of questions.

Mr. Dafis: It is now two months since the strategy group meeting, following the publication of the report of

the west Wales task force. I am sure that the Secretary of State agrees that it is important for momentum and confidence to be maintained in the task force area, but we have heard nothing since that meeting at the end of January. When will the Secretary of State be in a position to give us a progress report on what has happened since the end of January and when will he announce the name of the task force project director?

Mr. Hunt: First, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the west Wales task force and the strategy group were set up through a Welsh Office initiative. I have chaired each of the group's meetings and I am determined that it should reach a positive result. On the Withybush project, as he knows, £0·5 million has been allocated to provide meat processing facilities at Withybush next year and officials are liaising closely with Preseli Pembrokeshire to ensure maximum benefit to Withbush and the community that it serves. Will the hon. Gentleman also recognise that several of the projects announced today in and around Dyfed will bring good news to some of his constituents?

Mr. Barry Jones: May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that last Friday 260 aerospace workers lost their jobs, adding to the 3,200 unemployed people in my constituency and to the 17,000 who are out of work in my county and taking £3 million a year out of the local economy? That is a serious blow and comes hard on the heels of the recently announced loss of 500 Airbus jobs. May I warn the right hon. Gentleman that the President of the Board of Trade seeks to take development area status from my constituency? I want a commitment from him that he will fight for that status.

Mr. Hunt: There were several points there. First, on corporate jets, I regret the job losses, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased that Broughton will remain the main manufacturing centre for corporate jets. The hon. Gentleman may recall that unemployment in his constituency alone was more than 5,000 some years ago and that the figure has now fallen considerably. Of course I shall do my best to ensure that Wales has a positive response from the review of assisted area status being conducted by the President of the Board of Trade and myself, but the hon. Gentleman must decide whether to support his party in the Lobby tonight on an amendment that would destroy the opportunity of jobs at the power station.

Japanese Corporations

11. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last had meetings with the management of Japanese-owned corporations based in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Japanese investment in Wales continues to be a great success and I have regular contact with the companies concerned, both in Wales and in Japan.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Wales has the highest investment from Japan of any nation in the European Community, on a per capita basis, and probably the highest invesment on an absolute basis? Does he agree that that is a result of two things? First, it is a testimony to the hardworking spirit of the people of Wales. Secondly, as it is the Prime Minister's birthday, today of all days should not we accept that it is also due to his unique opt-out from the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty, which creates jobs in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend that we are very proud of the tremendous Japanese investment in Wales. I hope that every hon. Member will join me in commending the Japanese for the way in which they continually put more resources into Wales. We now have 43 Japanese companies, employing more than 12,000 people, and they constantly tell me that they come to Wales because the quality of the work force there is second to none outside Japan.

Dr. Kim Howells: Although all hon. Members recognise the invaluable role played by inward investment, does the Secretary of State realise that Japanese, German or American inward investment, can be only a supplement to the well-being of the economy of Wales? The disgraceful decision to close the Betws and Taff Merthyr collieries—which will be debated later—will do nothing to strengthen the Welsh economy. All that it will do is put men out of work and families on the dole.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the decision on Taff Merthyr was communicated to the work force as long ago as 20 August last year. The future of Taff Merthyr is now a matter of consultation between British Coal and the men. British Coal has made it absolutely clear that if it sees no further use for either Taff Merthyr or Betws, it feels obliged to offer the future management of that pit to the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Germany. It must be a matter of great pride to Wales that we have just heard from Bosch that it plans virtually to double employment at its factory, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) earlier. Bosch says that the performance of its factory in south Wales is better than any factory it has in Germany or anywhere else in the world. There must be great pride in Wales at those comments.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Scientific and Technical Research

24. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what his Department's total spending on supporting scientific and technical research projects was in 1991-92.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The science budget in 1991-92 was £930 million.

Mr. Hawkins: In thanking my right hon. Friend for that answer, may I ask him to join me in welcoming the fact that some £30 million from his Department's budget is being spent via the Natural Environment Research Council on developing models for dealing with flooding problems in coastal areas? That research will be of enormous benefit to my constituents and will help in the design of new sea defences to cope with our flooding problems. It will also be of benefit to other right hon. and hon. Members who represent coastal constituencies.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Given the very large sums that have to be spent on coastal

defences, it is vital that good basic science underlies it. I am sure that the House is proud of that work by the NERC and much of its other work.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Is the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster aware that in the past 10 years there has been a 30 per cent. cut in real terms in the amount devoted by Government to civil research and development? In total, between Government and industry, we devote 1 per cent. less of our GDP to research and development than do Japan and Germany. How can we compete industrially with those industrial super-powers when we devote so little of our resources to research and development?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is wrong if he is talking about Government spending in relation to civil research. The United Kingdom spends about 0·51 per cent. of GDP compared with 0·43 per cent. in Japan. We are in the middle of the pack of the G7 countries in relation to Government expenditure on civil research.

Charter Marks

25. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many charter marks have been awarded so far.

31. **Mr. Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many charter mark awards have now been made.

Mr. Waldegrave: Thirty-six charter marks were awarded in 1992. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched the 1993 charter mark scheme on 17 February. The closing date for entries is 30 June 1993 and the charter mark winners will be announced in September or October. Up to 100 charter marks can be awarded this year.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that even organisations that were unsuccessful in obtaining charter marks this time round, such as Bydales school in Marske in my constituency, benefited greatly from having the opportunity to review the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the services that they provide in accordance with charter principles?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Several of the winners expressed a great welcome for the charter mark. For instance, St. Mary's secondary school in Londonderry said:

"The prize is a tremendous morale booster to everyone connected with the school and the community it serves."

That was also true of those who did not win on this occasion but who might in the future.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the citizens charter and the charter mark movement have had an enormous effect on both companies and public bodies? Purbeck district council in my constituency has started a scheme called Purbeck Pride to involve everyone in providing better public service and to involve private enterprise in giving service of a high standard.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. A beneficial competition is going on between various parties in local and central Government over who invented the concept. I was with the Labour leader of Leicester city council last week to see that council's local charter prizes being awarded. I do not begrudge the council that competition; it is helping to raise standards of public service.

Mr. Skinner: Why have the Government never awarded charter marks to the miners and others who work in mining? The productivity of British pits has risen by 155 per cent. in the past seven years and last week Bolsover produced coal at 50p a gigajoule—that is half the world price. So why do not the Government give the Bolsover miners a charter mark, instead of the right hon. Gentleman and his mates, including Tarzan and all the rest of them, closing 31 pits? If he did the job right and handed out awards to the workers, not to some of these tinpot business men, the Government would be doing the right thing. Instead they propose to throw 30,000 miners out of work. The right hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself: he and his mates should have been strangled at birth.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that the productivity gains to which the hon. Gentleman refers, together with the support offered by the President, will increase the market for coal. That is exactly what the proposals are about.

Freemasons (Public Servants)

26. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to make membership of the freemasons by public servants a declarable interest; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Civil servants are already required to report conflicts of interest which affect their official duties. This includes freemasonry, where relevant. We intend for clarity to incorporate a list of possible conflicts of interest in the civil service code, which will include a reference to freemasonry.

Mr. Mullin: I am grateful for that reply. I think I am right in saying that the Ministry has no serious plans to face up to this problem, apart from a token reference. Of what is the Minister afraid? Is it of the fact that the Tory party is so deeply in hock to masonic interests that it dare not face up to what hon. Members on both sides of the House know is quite a large problem? Only a few weeks ago a Tory Member mentioned to me that 34 of the 39 members of his local county council were masons——

Madam Speaker: Order. Interesting though they are, we do not want conversational exchanges across the Floor of the House. I think that the hon. Gentleman has made his point now.

Mr. Mullin: Is not the point the fact that the Tory party is too deeply in hock to masonic interests?

Mr. Jackson: I am afraid that I cannot join the hon. Gentleman in his paranoia, but I will make the point that we have been meeting the concern that he has expressed. I have announced a shift of policy—we will be changing the civil service code and the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that. We have communicated with the Council of Civil Service Unions and we are consulting it about the step. If the hon. Gentleman wants to do a serious bit of lobbying, as opposed to making paranoid party points, he may like to talk to the civil service unions.

Mr. Wilshire: May I preface my question by saying that I am not a mason? I am, however, alarmed by what I heard my hon. Friend say. Does he agree that if he is to require the disclosure of membership of the masons, that establishes a fundamental principle that would have serious, even dangerous, implications—including a requirement to disclose membership of a religious order or organisation? That would be very dangerous indeed.

Mr. Jackson: That will not be a requirement. The requirement will be that if the civil servant is aware of a possible conflict of interests, he should declare it. The amendment of the code on which we are consulting the civil service unions would put it on all fours with the local government code, which has been working successfully and which does not give rise to the objections that my hon. Friend cites.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that if that welcome change to the civil service code is to take place and apply to senior civil servants, it should be applied also to judges?

Mr. Jackson: The Office of Public Service and Science is responsible for many things, but not the judiciary. I will draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor, who is so responsible, to the question asked by the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Charterline

27. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the pilot Charterline telephone information service will be launched.

Mr. Waldegrave: In May 1993.

Mr. Deva: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that, by publishing information on the police, local authorities and the national health service on Charterline, he will augment and complement the publication of the key performance indicators that have been agreed already?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend. It will be a practical step in making public services more accessible and comprehensible to their users. If the pilot scheme in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire is a success, we shall offer great benefit to people when we take it national in due course.

Mr. Fisher: When the Charterline opens, will it not take great pressure off the calls from the public asking whether they have the right to know? Will the Minister stop saying, "Yes, in principle, we support more open government but, no, we do not support legislation" and back the Right to Know Bill, which is before the House, and which has the wide support not only of my right hon. Friends and all Opposition parties but the media, the public and a growing number of his own Back Benchers? If we had the right to know, the Charterline, as it existed today, would be able to answer calls about why the Government have not given pit-by-pit information on pits that are marked for closure —information which would have meant that we had a better debate later this afternoon. Should not that be the way to take the pressure off Charterline?

Mr. Waldegrave: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity in getting his Bill, which is in Committee, mentioned on the Floor of the House. I understand that there are good debates going on in the Committee. He is right to link the charter campaign with openness, but it is a sadness to many of us that, for example, when steps were taken on publishing more educational information, that did not get much of a welcome from the Labour party.

Next Steps Agencies

28. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of key performance targets were met by next steps agencies in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Robert Jackson: On average, next steps agencies met three out of four of their key targets in 1991-92.

Mr. Gale: Given the undoubted success of that considerable reform, will my hon. Friend tell the House what plans he has for the creation of new agencies in the immediate future? Will he reassure the House that the creation of any new agencies will not weaken the accountability of Ministers to Members of Parliament?

Mr. Jackson: As it happens, a number of new agencies will be coming on stream in the next couple of weeks. Already, 50 per cent. of the civil service is working in agencies and that will rise to 60 per cent. by the beginning of next month, which is the beginning of the new financial year. As to accountability, hon. Members have only to look at the huge range of information provided about next steps agencies in the Library to see how much accountability has been improved by the introduction of the agency idea.

Mr. Kaufman: Is not it ludicrous for the Minister to talk about the fulfilment of performance targets when the Benefits Agency remains such a shambles? For example, last week, a constituent of mine had her benefit application delayed because of one mistake discovered after three months and another mistake discovered after 11 months. Is not it time that Mr. Michael Bichard was sacked from a job for which he collects £79,000 a year for preventing those in poverty from getting the pittance for which they apply and that that service was made properly answerable to the House of Commons?

Mr. Jackson: The whole House is familiar with the background to the problems relating to the disability living allowance and the Benefits Agency. It has been the subject of many exchanges at Question Time and in other debates, but a strong effort to put matters right in the agency has resulted in real progress.

Mr. Harry Greenway: May I have my hon. Friend's assurance that the creation of the new agencies will not suck work out of London, where it is well done and valuably done, even though I know that, where work has been agencified—forgive that terrible word—away from London, arrangements have been made for telephone connections between Londoners and the agency concerned?

Mr. Jackson: The Government are aware that the geographic and economic circumstances that underlay the relocation policy need to be reappraised in the light of the way in which the recession has affected London, including jobs in London. That is something about which we are thinking.

Ms Mowlam: Will the Minister try to answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)—the matter concerns hon. Members on both sides of the House—about accountability in agencies? There is declining accountability, with the Government creating health boards, education boards, development corporations and training and enterprise councils and we are to see the introduction of police boards. As one of the Sunday newspapers reported, appointees tend to be place-people from the Conservative party. Will the Minister explain how genuine democratic accountability is meant to function?

Mr. Jackson: The creation of agencies has made no difference to accountability to Ministers and, through Ministers, to the House. If the hon. Lady is so concerned about accountability, why did she propose during a recent interview

"to be more radical than the Government, to step over them on next steps and say, 'If we are being serious, let us give an agency manager the power to make decisions within his budget'"?

If the hon. Lady is so concerned about accountability, why is she proposing to go further down the road that the Government are following?

Citizens Charter

29. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to extend the citizens charter into new areas of public services.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The citizens charter principles extend to all areas of public service. We will, however, publish new standards of service in 1993 in charters for child support, for the local environment and for further and higher education. Existing service standards—for example, in primary and secondary education—will be increased to reflect improvements in the delivery of public services.

Ms Quin: Has the Minister any plans to give disabled people a better deal through citizens charters? Will he consider the position of one of my constituents, whose journey by rail on a Sunday was disrupted by repairs? After waiting for a long time, he was forced to accept a lengthy bus journey. That proved difficult for him because there were no facilities for disabled people. Will the Minister review the charters to ascertain how he can give disabled people a better deal?

Mr. Jackson: We had a useful exchange on this issue when questions to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster were last before the House and the matter was raised by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who is sitting next to the hon. Lady. I tried to explain then that the Government had considered the possibility of introducing a charter for people with disabilities. We concluded that the best way to handle problems of the sort that she described was to ensure that, where appropriate, the interests of disabled people are taken into account in the creation of every charter. If the hon. Lady wishes to contact me about the constituency case to which she referred, I will do what I can to ascertain what best can be established.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend believe that it might be a useful exercise to extend citizens charters to local government, especially where there has been corruption and even, possibly, the Transport and General Workers Union?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend makes a good point. It would be appropriate to extend the citizens charter to areas of local government. I say that in the light of this comment in *Tribune*:

"Labour local government is lack-lustre and incompetent. In a few cases it is simply corrupt and nepotistic. This is nothing new. Ineffectual or rotten Labour councils . . . have been a feature of British political life for as long as anyone can remember."

The way to put that right is to have a proper charter for Labour local authorities.

Mr. Cryer: If the Minister extends his charter marks into transport, will the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority and Labour-controlled Bradford council be given a charter mark if they restore the homerunner bus service for women? The service was established with Home Office money to provide safe and secure transport for women travelling late at night. It is facing cancellation because of the withdrawal of Home Office money. If Labour-controlled councils continue to provide that service despite the great difficulties that they face as a result of central Government cuts, will they be given a charter mark, or are charter marks given only to Tory-controlled organisations?

Mr. Jackson: As it happens, this is not a question about charter marks. If the hon. Gentleman is aware of any organisation in his constituency that should apply for a charter mark, we hope that it will do so.

Charter Mark

33. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many public service organisations have asked his Department for information on the 1993 charter mark competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Since the launch of the 1993 charter mark scheme on 17 February, the citizens charter unit has sent out nearly 40,000 copies of the charter mark information leaflet and more than 5,000 copies of the charter mark guide for applicants. I will send one to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Early indications are that there will be a very good response.

Mr. Arnold: Does my hon. Friend welcome the way in which Conservative-controlled Kent county council is applying the charter principles to its whole range of services for people in Kent?

Mr. Jackson: I am delighted to join my hon. Friend in his commendation. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster visited Kent county council last autumn to see the progress of its charter programme and he was very impressed by what he saw of that efficient and progressive Conservative council.

Mr. Olner: Is the Minister aware that a conflict may arise from this Thursday in relation to care in the community? Will he see fit to extend the charters into such activities, so that the services required are not rationed by

the county councils' financial arrangements? It is crucial for the people involved to know that they will get a fair deal.

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. I will certainly examine how the charter principles can be applied to the new arrangements under community care, if they are not already covered.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received any request from the Government for time to make a statement on the deplorable action of the French in regard to the Royal Navy, giving the response that Her Majesty's Government will make, in view of the possibility of further action by French fishermen later today?

Madam Speaker: I have had no information that at this stage any Minister is seeking to make a statement on that issue.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have given you notice of this point of order, which concerns the availability of papers for the debate on the coal industry. I particularly request that the protocol agreement relating to the French electricity link be made available. It was referred to extensively by the President of the Board of Trade in his statement last Thursday, and is referred to in all the documents relevant to the debate. I remind you, Madam Speaker, that the minutes of evidence given to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry include part of the protocol agreement.

Last Thursday, the President of the Board of Trade sought to leave the impression that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) had announced and negotiated the link in 1978. He accused my right hon. Friend of not having wrapped up the details of the contract before announcing it. You will know, Madam Speaker, that the protocol agreement was not signed until 1981. You may also know that it has never been published, that none of the consequential agreements has been published and that both protocol and agreement were made available to members of the Trade and Industry Select Committee on a confidential basis.

My point of order is this: how can the House and the public form a judgment on the advantages and disadvantages to Britain of the link when the basic agreement is not available to the House or the public? As the President of the Board of Trade sought on Thursday to make significant political capital out of his statement, I strongly urge that he be pressed to make the protocol and other agreements available to the House at the earliest opportunity.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am ready to answer the hon. Gentleman's point of order, but the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has been mentioned. If he has a point of order—not a point of argument—of course I must hear it, but I will hear only from the right hon. Gentleman who has been mentioned.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point of order relates not to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), but to the fact that, in quoting my words, the President of the Board of Trade failed to state that, in announcing the connector, I had said that it would "provide an opportunity for the export of coal-fired electricity to France."—[*Official Report*, 3 August 1987; Vol. 955, c. 546.] That was the statement that I made, and the President of the Board of Trade suppressed it. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Some right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to jump the gun. These are matters for the debate which we have not yet reached.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) for giving me notice of his point of order. I have ascertained that the protocol and subsequent documents that he wishes to be made available are commercial agreements between the Central Electricity Generating Board and Electricite de France. I cannot direct that such documents should be laid before the House. As the hon. Gentleman knows, other papers relevant to this matter are available. It is not for me to comment on whether or not they are adequate, in the hon. Gentleman's opinion, for the purposes of today's debate.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further points of order on a ruling that I have already given.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that this afternoon you will announce that the debate will be on the White Paper and the official Opposition's amendment. May I raise with you points that were raised last Thursday during business questions at columns 1259 and 1260 regarding the amendment that stands in my name and that of a number of other hon. Members? The Trade and Industry Select Committee was asked, by a resolution of this House, to look into this matter and report. Will the Select Committee's recommendations be put before the House? Since the White Paper was published by the President of the Board of Trade only a short time ago, hon. Members ought to have the opportunity to vote today on the Select Committee's recommendations.

Madam Speaker: It is not for me to determine when the Select Committee's report should be debated in the House. I recollect the exchanges last Thursday to which the hon. Gentleman refers. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that, under Standing Orders, I am required, at 10 o'clock tonight, to put all the matters under consideration. It is for that reason that I am able to select only one amendment. That amendment stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. It is impracticable, under our Standing Orders, to select more than one amendment for today's debate. I intended to make that announcement before we started the debate. If we can start it, I am sure that it will all become clear to hon. Members.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order; I am on my feet. Has the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central something further to say?

Mr. Caborn: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you saying that the interpretation has to be that the Government did not respond to the request of the shadow Leader of the House that we should have a full debate and vote on the question?

Madam Speaker: The business of the House is not a matter for the Speaker, strange though that may seem. It is a matter for the Leader of the House and the usual channels. I have to work under the Standing Orders. For that reason, I am limited to selecting only one amendment today.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I want no more points of order on the matters that I have dealt with.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is this a separate point of order?

Mr. Redmond: Yes, it is. May I ask for your guidance, Madam Speaker? Does business confidentiality still apply when a company has gone out of existence? The CEGB no longer exists. Therefore, any agreement between that company and the French is no longer a commercial agreement.

Madam Speaker: The question that was put to me was whether I could require the documents to be laid before this House. I have no authority to require documents which are other than state papers to be laid before this House.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that when Sessional Orders have been tabled at the beginning of parliamentary Sessions I have on several occasions raised issues and there has been debate about them. I draw your attention to the fact that Sessional Orders give the right to Members of Parliament to be heard.

In the face of a considerable lobby, may I ask you, Madam Speaker, to ensure, first, that Sessional Orders are applied and, secondly, that some of the energy of the police is used to facilitate the lobby by miners of this House so that they can present their very strong case, particularly to Tory Members of Parliament, in the Lobby and in the Grand Committee Room and make sure that some Tory MPs go into the Lobby to keep open the 31 pits?

Madam Speaker: I shall certainly see that the matter is referred to the Serjeant at Arms and do what I can to facilitate the entrance of constituents to the building.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You referred to the official documents being presented to the House. The Secretary of State laid considerable emphasis on article 30 of the treaty of Rome. Article 31 of the treaty requires lists of products and services that are subject to quantitative restrictions to be agreed by member states. I have checked with the Library. No such list is available. I suggest that it is critical information for the debate.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman were to refer to the Library, it would be extremely helpful. The treaty of Rome has been in existence for quite some time now.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund [No. 3] Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Coal Industry

[Relevant documents: The First Report of the Trade and Industry Committee of Session 1992/93 on British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal (HC 237), and the Second Report from the Employment Committee of Session 1992/93 on the Employment Consequences of British Coal's Proposed Pit Closures (HC 262-I and -II).]

Madam Speaker: A number of hon. Members may well be disappointed at not being called today. Therefore, I am now appealing most firmly for voluntary restriction on length of speeches. I have no alternative but to limit to 10 minutes speeches made between the hours of 6 and 8 o'clock.

As I said earlier, I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.41 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move,

That this House approves the White Paper 'The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review' (Cm 2235).

Let me remind the House of the opportunities for British Coal that I announced last Thursday. I followed very carefully the arguments put forward by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. There were three themes to my proposals. The first was to create a wider market for coal. The second was to provide British Coal with a tapering subsidy to give it the chance to seize the opportunities of the enhanced market. The third was our determination to press ahead with our plans to privatise the industry.

Let me start with the wider market for coal. There are considerable differences of view as to the likely demand for coal. They reflect uncertainty about the longer-term demand for electricity. If the demand should prove to be as high as many commentators, including the Select Committee, expect, coal has every opportunity to take advantage of it. Within the existing firm forecasts, everyone agrees that we should help British Coal to secure the market that is currently filled by imports. That is why, on behalf of the Government, I am offering hundreds of millions of pounds to bridge the gap between British Coal's cost of production and world-related prices.

No one I know disputes that there is significant tonnage to go for, although, as I have told the House, there is considerable disagreement among the Select Committee, independent consultants, British Coal and the electricity generators as to the likely size of that market. I think that everyone understands that no amount of forecasting creates a marketplace; it is customers who create a marketplace. However, the Government are putting British Coal in the most favourable position to add these supplemental tonnages to the core contracts which, I am pleased to tell the House, have been announced today.

I have also told the House of the various ways in which I acted on behalf of the Government to increase the market for coal. The importation of orimulsion is to be reduced to the minimum contractual level for the foreseeable future. British Coal told the Select Committee that it believed that opencast production would decline from 16 million tonnes to 12 million tonnes. Last Thursday, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment issued a statement of interim guidance to planning authorities on opencast coal developments. We intend to renew our dialogue as soon as practicable with the French Government about the use of the interconnector.

I have, of course, published a summary of the legal advice which confirms beyond doubt that unilateral action by the Government would leave us open to very considerable risks. The outgoing French Government told us that they expected the present imports to decline and they confirmed that we are able to use their national transmission system to export electricity to France and to third countries beyond. As confirmation of that, a £100 million contract has been signed for electricity to be exported from the United Kingdom to France over the next eight years.

I have announced that, with the Director General of Electricity Supply, I shall enter into discussions with large users to examine the circumstances in which they might bypass the pool and whether demand-side bidding would improve the workings of the electricity market. In addition, the Government are reviewing the current regulation of on-site generation, which could offer large users an alternative source of electricity. They are all ways in which the demand for electricity could be increased, and that in turn means greater opportunities for British Coal.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): I am grateful for the various measures that my right hon. Friend has announced but, at the very moment he was standing at the Dispatch Box making a statement last Thursday, a representative from British Coal was briefing the unions in Nottingham—the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers specifically—on the prospects, as British Coal saw them. It told them bluntly that there was no additional market for coal to justify retaining the 12 pits beyond the period of the subsidy and that, furthermore, if there was to be any hope of survival, it would be by reducing their costs to the point that they could displace one of the 19 pits which at present has an assured future. That would seem to be directly sabotaging my right hon. Friend's statement and assurances.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises a most serious situation, which I have discussed with the chairman of British Coal this morning. I shall deal in a minute or two with the precise points that he has raised.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The Secretary of State has been outlining what the Government are prepared to do to fulfil the statement made last Thursday. Is he prepared to assure the House that there will be a level playing field for the coal industry compared to the gas and nuclear industries? That is very important to the 700 men who work at the Sharlston pit in my constituency. The pit is doomed to early closure, as outlined by the Secretary of State last Thursday. May we be assured that there will be a level playing field and that the reserves at Sharlston will be worked? Unless the Secretary of State can assure us of that, the debate is meaningless.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman asks many questions. I must point out to him that the decision to close a particular pit has to be taken by British Coal. British Coal can take that decision only when it has gone through a process of consultation which takes into account all the issues that are raised in such a process. I cannot

[Mr. Heseltine]

today—and no Minister ever could in such circumstances—anticipate what the outcome of the consultation will be. The hon. Gentleman should listen carefully to what I have to say because it will apply to a large number of other pits—indeed, to all other pits—as well as to that to which he referred. A significant number of things that I have said, and which I shall be able to repeat in my speech, are relevant to the pits that may face closure.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The problem with what the Secretary of State has said today, what he said the other day and what was said on 13 October is that the figures for the contracts for coal to the power stations were 40 million tonnes last October plus 30 million for the four successive years. Last week he said that the figure was 160 million tonnes. It is the same amount—40 million tonnes followed by four successive years at 30 million tonnes. If he does not alter those contracts upwards, those 19 pits —[HON. MEMBERS: "Of course he cannot."] That was what he was supposed to do. That is what the review was all about. If he and British Coal do not alter those contracts, the 19 pits that still exist, the 12 pits that will stay open for two years, the six that have been mothballed and the pit at Maltby will all be scrambling for the same amount of coal. He can talk until he is blue in the face, but he must alter those basic contracts with the power stations, otherwise we shall not save any of the pits that he talks about.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not know about talking until I am blue in the face. The hon. Gentleman usually talks until he is red in the face if he is running into difficulty. However, if he had waited until I had made further progress with my speech, he would have seen that, in addition to explaining the additional opportunities that I have been announcing to the House since last Thursday, I am now about to come to the essence of the recommendation of the Select Committee's proposals: that we should help British Coal to gain some of the enhanced markets by subsidising its production costs.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Secretary of State explain how it is possible to make a decision about the future of the coal industry in isolation? He has agreed, in the White Paper, to bring forward the nuclear review, but that will not be until later this year. A decision on renewables will be taken later this year. The planning guidance on opencast mining will be issued, presumably, later this year—there is interim guidance already. The decisions about orimulsion by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will not be made until later this year. The Secretary of State gives the impression that he is trying to buy a few votes to get him over the hurdle of Back-Bench opposition tonight. The strategic decisions about Britain's energy policy will be put off into the future when, one by one, each industry will have a decision taken separately. He will have washed his hands of the coal industry by selling it off.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman must know that the first imperative was to secure the signing of the contracts that have been announced today. They are due to run out on 31 March. Without them there was no contract at all for British Coal. I then agreed with the Select Committee all the items that it was to consider and all the items that I was to consider, as I was not prepared to come back to the House and have it suggested that we had both not looked at all the items of common interest. There has been immensely constructive work together to secure those ends. I then took the principal recommendations of the Select Committee which relate not to core contracts, but to supplemental contracts.

It is those supplemental contracts which are now capable of being negotiated because of the decisions that I am announcing today and the decisions announced last Thursday. In addition, the market itself can be widened because of the various decisions that I have already announced. A significant number of decisions have already been taken. But—and this is the critical point from which the Select Committee cannot run and from which I cannot run—in the end it is not for Governments just to forecast or to say what they would like to happen. Customers have got to come forward and sign the contracts.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there are thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of firms throughout British industry which, during the downturn in the economy, have been struggling to maintain their markets and to become more competitive? They have done that—all honour to them—without any subsidy from the taxpayer. Does my right hon. Friend further accept that the miners are exceptionally fortunate to have been given this opportunity to win back more markets if they can? They are now on their own; it is up to them to win back the markets, and they will not do so if they go on strike.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has raised some important points.

Ever since I became responsible for this policy subject, I have been deeply concerned about the problems facing the mining industry and particularly about the mining communities that are dependent upon that industry. That is one of the reasons why I was able to persuade my right hon. and hon. Friends to secure a significant redundancy package—which is not in any way equalled by those received by the vast majority of people who lose their jobs in the recession—and to make my announcement about the regeneration package about which I shall say something in a few moments.

The House is well aware of the problems that face tight-knit communities when the principal industry on which they depend declines or has to be closed. That is not a new phenomenon: the problem has faced this country as long as I have been in politics and has not been restricted to the coal mining industry.

Let me now deal with the subsidy that the Government will make available to meet the difference between British Coal's cost of production and the world market-related prices. I have accepted the principal recommendation of the Select Committee that I should provide a subsidy to enable British Coal to compete with imports, which are currently running at about 8 million tonnes. Some people have claimed that the subsidy is only for two years. That is not what we say in the White Paper.

The subsidy is there to help British Coal become world competitive over a period of time. The Government's policy, therefore, is that the subsidy should be reduced, over the period to privatisation. Yes, as I said on Thursday, we are committed to privatisation at the earliest practical opportunity. It is the only way of enabling the

industry to take full advantage of the opportunities that the market offers. Privatisation may well come in two years' time. I myself would very much like that to happen. If it does not come then, the subsidies can continue. If it does, negotiations about the financial terms become part of the sale process. I must emphasise that we have made it clear that we are prepared to embrace the range of figures put forward by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: It is important that the House should hear a complete section of my speech at a time so that it can take these matters on board.

We have made it clear that we are prepared to embrace the range of figures put forward by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. The Government are prepared to follow the central proposal that emerged from a thorough and careful review. I have not been able to accept every aspect of that reveiw, but, in the main, I have consistently praised the work of the Select Committee. It should be remembered that we have based our response to the House on the work and conclusions of an all-party Select Committee of the House.

Finally, I have guaranteed—and the chairman of British Coal has announced—that no pit threatened with closure will be closed without the private sector being given the chance to operate it. In that context, I am prepared to offer the private sector equivalent subsidy arrangements, subject to the relevant EC provisions, if it can demonstrate that it can secure a genuinely additional market.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Has not the Minister now given the whole game away? The subsidy is to encourage privatisation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] Of course it is. Everyone in the mining industry knows that, if a pit is mothballed and offered to the private sector, the private sector will get the benefit of the subsidy and offer to re-employ some miners—some—at lower wages and in poorer conditions than they had before. That is why the Minister's statement last week was simply not believed by anyone. We did not think that he wanted to save jobs; we thought that he wanted to put the mines back into private hands. That is what this is all about.

Mr. Heseltine: Talk of giving the game away is rich coming from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who announced the connector with France without signing up on the details. If anything was given away, it was Britain's mining industry by the right hon. Gentleman.

We will press ahead urgently with our plans to privatise the industry. On any calculations, British Coal, as a private company, would be one of the world's largest coal companies.

I made it clear last Thursday, and I have made it clear from the beginning, that I cannot offer a guarantee about the size of a future market. In deciding not to specify the number of pits for the future, the Select Committee clearly recognised that and agreed with the point that I am making. As the chairman of British Coal said today:

"I welcome the fact that all collieries have an opportunity to compete for a market that was not available at the outset of the coal review."

The subsidy arrangements will therefore enable British Coal to do that. The chairman has made it clear that his company will do all in its power to seize the opportunities that the White Paper makes possible. There is, therefore, now a significant new market to go for. These opportunities are above and beyond those provided by the core contracts.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend said about the chairman of British Coal. Statements apparently came from British Coal this weekend which gave the clear impression to some people that a number of the 12 pits would not remain open for more than about nine months and that, among those that did remain open, some might well be substituted for the 19 that are not at present on any list. I should be most grateful for any assurances that my right hon. Friend can give on those points.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He heard what I have just said about the pits on the list of 12 and those on the list of 19. The chairman of British Coal has made it quite clear, and I could repeat the words, if my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) would like me to—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will. As I said, the chairman of British Coal said today:

"I welcome the fact that all collieries have an opportunity to compete for a market that was not available at the outset of the coal review."

That is the point that I am trying to put to the House. The subsidy arrangements will enable British Coal to compete for that market which was not available. The chairman of British Coal has made it absolutely clear that he will do all within his power, as will his company, to seize the opportunities that are now available as a result of what the White Paper has made possible.

As I was saying, those opportunities are above and beyond those provided by the core contracts. It is not British Coal's intention that the future of the 12 pits will be secured at the expense of the 19 pits which were outside the scope of the present review. The opportunities for the 12 pits are those of the additional market.

The Government are, as I said in response to an earlier intervention, well aware of the very serious impact of pit closures on mining communities. We have made available to British Coal one of the most generous packages for voluntary redundancy currently available. In October, a substantial package of regeneration measures of about £180 million was announced. I augmented that in my announcement of last Thursday to bring it to around £200 million.

As the House will know, Lord Walker has been appointed to pull together the activities of all the Government Departments and agencies and he has already visited many of the areas that might face closures. The training and enterprise council programme has been agreed in principle by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. Those contingency plans make provision for some 25,000 additional people to be retrained and helped.

British Coal has made it clear that it will act quickly to reclaim sites for development. Enhanced assisted area status has been promised to Doncaster, Barnsley and Mansfield.

In October, I announced that the Government would consider enterprise zones for those areas most affected by closure, should closures be determined by British Coal. I can now go further than that. If there is a substantial reduction in employment at mines in the vicinity of

[Mr. Heseltine]

Easington in County Durham, the Dearne valley or Mansfield as a consequence of the proposals announced by British Coal on Thursday, we intend that enterprise zones should be set up in each relevant area. Thus, there could be up to three new enterprise zones.

The zones are intended to provide a focus for regeneration over a wide area. They are expected to generate several thousand new jobs and attract significant new investment over the next 10 years. Their aim is to stimulate the construction of new manufacturing and commercial premises and promote economic diversity by introducing new enterprises. We have promised further help for those areas affected by closure proposals through extension of the regional enterprise grant scheme for small firms in areas not already benefiting.

Last week, I announced financial support for the new east midlands regional development organisation which, among other things, will promote inward investment to the region. Additional money will be available to regional development organisations in the north-east, Yorkshire and the west midlands. English Estates has put together a provisional programme of about 1·5 million sq ft of business and industrial space and acquisition and servicing of 600 acres of land. The programme will support some 18,000 jobs.

I can well understand the anxiety of communities faced with the need to change from their present reliance on coal. I know, as do many hon. Members on both sides of the House, how successful such change can work out to be. The fact is that, during the 1980s, we have seen change introduced and we have seen the results.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): One matter of anxiety in the coalfields which the Minister has not yet touched on is the question of safety in the mines. On several occasions in the past six months, the Minister and the Secretary of State for Employment have referred to the desirability of dismantling the safety regulations. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that that is a matter of enormous concern to the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, which sponsors me in the House and which has made an immense contribution to maintaining both safety and production records in the pits. Does he recognise that, if he goes ahead and dismantles safety in the mines, lives will be lost—and it will be on his conscience and that of his colleagues.

Mr. Heseltine: When I joined my Department and examined the political issues facing coal, the first thing I said was that I would do nothing to deteriorate—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must realise that interruptions use up the precious time available.

Mr. Heseltine: I sometimes wonder what people who must go down the mines feel when they see the response of the Labour party. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) asked a serious and important question to which I was about to give an unequivocal answer. I made it clear that I would do nothing to prejudice safety standards in the mines. That was the first thing I said, and I have remained consistent in that position, although the House fully realises that these matters are, rightly, for the Health and Safety Executive.

As the House knows, we are consulting over the 1908 Act. I give the House an assurance that no decision will be taken in my Department which prejudices safety in the mines. I hope that that is as categorical as I can make it. We have seen changes take place before. In many ways, Lord Walker changed the economic opportunities in south Wales. His contribution was proverbial, and Labour Members know exactly how much he did.

When the steel industry faced closure in Shotton, some 7,000 jobs went. But 10,000 new job opportunities were created in the 1980s.

I had to help with the problem of Corby when the British Steel plant faced closure, with a loss of 3,500 jobs. With enthusiastic support—I say it—from the local Labour council, the new town corporation and my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), 11,000 new jobs have been created in that part of England.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On the jobs issue to which my right hon. Friend is addressing himself, will he give an assurance that if, at the end of the consultation process for Trentham and perhaps some of the other pits, Trentham was privatised, it would have full and free access to all coal purchasers so that it could run its affairs properly, in line with the market forces that my right hon. Friend has considered? Will he please give me an assurance, especially about Trentham, on that point?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will understand the difficulty of intervening in the statutory procedure for consultation. However, I made it clear to him that any pit —obviously, that includes Trentham—which British Coal determines to close after consultation will be made available to the private sector. I have made it clear this afternoon, and I have said earlier, that if any private sector organisation can find a genuinely additional market for the coal, I shall be prepared to offer a subsidy along the lines of what I have announced so that it can sell the coal.

There is nothing to stop such a private sector organisation approaching the generators in the electricity supply industry. However, my hon. Friend will understand that we are talking about a genuine additional marketplace. Therefore, it would be misleading if I did not say that I would not regard access to the core contracts which have been announced today as a genuine additional marketplace. That would merely have the effect of closing down pits in other parts of the country. I have given my hon. Friend a wide-ranging answer which applies in general terms to other pits which might face closure.

In truth, two fundamental differences of approach have emerged continuously in the debate about coal on the Floor of the House. First, the Labour party, with the significant exception of members of the Select Committee, has refused to engage in any serious discussion of the options. It has set aside any attempt at reasoned arguments, often those of its own members of the Select Committee.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

The Labour party has argued that there is an opportunity for massive intervention in the marketplace that would protect the coal industry from competitive pressure. That is the first distinction between the arguments of the Opposition and those of the

Government. The Government believe that energy policy is a matter for a competitive marketplace in which a diversity of supply is on offer to a wide range of customers who, in the exercise of their discretion, will exert a downward pressure on price and continuous pressure for efficiency.

The second gaping divide is the almost unbelievable contrast between the policies Labour Governments have pursued in practice and the pretence which the Labour party now offers about what it believes that we should do. I begin with the concept of the visionary plan which the Labour party tells us about. It could not be more clearly stated. In 1974, the "Plan for Coal" opened with the following ringing sentences":

"Coal's major role and new importance in the entirely changed energy situation facing Britain is clearly presented in the National Coal Board's Plan for Coal. It is the most ambitious forward strategy ever prepared by the mining industry, calling for £600 million of new investment, first to stabilise and then to expand the nation's coal-mining capacity over the next decade."

On page 9 the vision was quantified.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): How many tonnes?

Mr. Heseltine: As always, the hon. Member has forgotten the figures, but I shall remind the House of them.

In 1973-74, the market of 133 million tonnes was to increase to 150 million tonnes by 1985. To achieve that, the plan was quite specific—new investment of £1·4 billion in the 10 years to 1985. That was the plan, the vision and the certainty. The only thing that has changed is that the hon. Member who had so much to do with the plan has forgotten what he put in it. At best, it was gross naivety and at worst it was a great confidence trick.

I have the figures for 1985. Far from achieving the forecast increase to 150 million tonnes, the figure was down to 118 million.

Mr. Benn: The Tories were in office in 1985.

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade is being economical with the truth. Have you the right to tell him to be more correct as he is deliberately misleading the House?

Madam Speaker: Order. First, that is not a point of order but a question of debate and perhaps the hon. Gentleman would care to debate it if he catches my eye. Secondly, I cannot accept his remark and must ask him to withdraw it, and not to waste the time of the House further in this serious debate.

Mr. Redmond: I withdraw it.

Mr. Heseltine: When I gave the figures for 1985, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield observed that the Tories were in power then. At last, I have found something on which I can agree with him. I had anticipated the Pavlovian reaction of Opposition Members. I realised that if I mentioned 1985 it would occur to them that it was all the fault of the wicked Tories. Their broad theory would be that if only we had got on with those plans and had allowed all the good work put in place by the Labour party to continue, as they had intended, all would have been well.

I took the liberty of checking the facts. In 1973-74—when the Tories were certainly in office, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield will remember—output was 142 million tonnes. In 1978-89, the output achieved under Labour was 119 million tonnes. Far from an increase, far from a plan for coal, all Labour managed was to decrease output by 16 per cent.

Your curiosity will have stretched to what happened to the bills, Madam Speaker. Labour promised to invest £1·4 billion in 10 years, but the actual cash invested was £5·7 billion. The cry will go up—perhaps the Opposition have learnt their lesson as the cry did not go up. All that dramatic increase in investment would have been under the Labour party.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): What about producing 119 million tonnes now, you clever little sod?

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not sure whether you heard that remark and I shall not repeat it, but it calls for a withdrawal, on your instructions.

Madam Speaker: I believe that I heard what I thought was an unparliamentary remark, in which case I must ask the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) to withdraw it.

Mr. Cryer: Certainly, Madam Speaker, I withdraw the word "clever".

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman understands that he is using up, as I have said before, very precious time in the debate. I do not want to exchange words with him about the word "clever". *[Interruption.]* Order. I shall use the authority that the House has given me if the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) continues to interrupt in that way. I am sure the hon. Member for Bradford, South will take the matter seriously and withdraw the remark.

Mr. Cryer: Certainly, Madam Speaker, I shall withdraw the word "little" and I shall withdraw the word "sod", because we need every vote in the House tonight. That is the only reason, because——

Madam Speaker: Order. I need no qualification; I need a withdrawal. The remark was withdrawn. I hope that hon. Members will watch their language in this debate, and any other debate.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sorry that the facts of Labour's record should so offend the hon. Member, but it is important that the whole House should understand exactly what they are.

As I have said, the Labour party promised £1·4 billion; the actual cash invested up to 1985 was £5·7 billion. Of course, the suggestion could be made that all of that had been invested before the Labour party left office. I have checked the figures again. Between 1974 and 1979, the investment in British Coal was £1·5 billion——

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that it is a point of order and not a point of frustration.

Mr. Boyce: Frustrated as I am, Madam Speaker, I believe that it is a genuine point of order for you.

[Mr. Boyce]

On Thursday, I raised with the President of the Board of Trade the fact that the people facing redundancy were little interested in what happened five years ago, 15 years ago or 40 years ago.

Madam Speaker: Order. It must be a point of order for me, not a point of argument.

Mr. Boyce: Do we have to listen to this nonsense all over again?

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members have a free choice in the House, whether to stay or to remove themselves elsewhere.

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the public may feel that the record of the Labour party is relevant to the discussion today. The great claim of the Labour party is that it has backed British Coal, but we have established that it actually ran down production. Its next great claim could be that it invested more than the Tories did in British Coal, but it cannot square that with the fact that when it had its five years, under the "Plan for Coal", it invested £1·5 billion and in the five years when the Tories had control, up to 1985, the figure was £4·2 billion. What we saw was Labour presiding over a declining market and rising costs.

What else should the Labour party have done? It could, of course, have cut back on nuclear power, but the Trade and Industry Select Committee said no to that idea, and the Government also said no. The House may think that I am talking about a Conservative Government, but I am not; the Labour Government said no. They said no on 15 May 1978, when the Labour Government decided:

"After three years of discussion, the Government believe that the nuclear component is necessary for the energy policy of the United Kingdom; that a Windscale expansion of the kind proposed is necessary for that nuclear component to develop properly."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1978; Vol. 950, c. 177.]

Who said it? The right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

This should cause the House—even Opposition Members—no surprise, because on 25 June of the same year the same right hon. Member said:

"All the forward forecasts, which go to the first quarter of the 21st century, indicate a growing role for nuclear power."

He was referring to the 20 per cent. about which I reminded the House last Thursday.

What are the facts? We have still not reached 20 per cent. dependence of nuclear power, yet the Labour party, despite its forecasts, is trying to back off. The fact is that the Opposition knew; they had the forecasts; and the only other qualification that they conspicuously possess is a remarkably short memory for the facts.

I need not detain the House long on the interconnector with France. I explained the position comprehensively last Thursday. So careless were the Labour Government with our national interest that they approved the multi-million pound project and authorised the Central Electricity Generating Board to proceed. Does the right hon. Member for Chesterfield want to tell the House that he did not know that the treaty of Rome was in place when he made the announcement? Or were the Labour Government so keen to announce jobs before the forthcoming general election that they sold the principle and left the critical details to the generosity of the French negotiators? Even for the right hon. Gentleman, that seems to be carrying the international brotherhood of man a shade beyond reasonable caution.

Of course, the Labour Government also knew about gas. They could have refused to allow so rapid a development of the North sea. They were the ones with a plan for coal. What was their policy on gas? On 8 December 1975, they said:

"Our objective, as a Government, has been to seek to do all we can in the national interest to develop gas and oil resources in the North Sea and to secure the situation for the future. That is the basis of a great future of this country."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1975; Vol. 902, c. 163.]

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Did I not hear you say that speeches should be short? Does not that apply to Ministers and Front-Bench spokesmen as well as to others who might be lucky enough, if there is still time when this Minister has finished, to be called? Would you bring the Minister to order and remind him of the time factor?

Madam Speaker: I have no authority to bring any Minister or Back Bencher to order in that sense. I simply make a plea, in the interests of all in the House, for shorter speeches.

Mr. Heseltine: I have deep sympathy with that point, Madam Speaker. I have given way to a large number of hon. Members, and I believe that I should report to the House the views of the Labour Government on gas, because one of the most important criticisms levelled by Labour—but not by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry—contains the idea that we should cut back on gas. So let me tell the House what the Labour Government said about it.

Mr. Simon Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The motion that the President of the Board of Trade moved related to the White Paper, which is meant to be about the future of the coal industry. Will the President deal with the future and not give us lessons that we, and above all the mining industry, know about the past?

Madam Speaker: All Members are responsible for the arguments that they put here. If we could make some progress, I might be able to call other Members to put the opposing arguments.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) must surely be aware—if he is not, his hon. Friends will remind him—that the Select Committee report extensively discussed the issue of gas. It must be relevant to our decisions and our discussions whether the Labour party believed that there was an alternative to cutting back on gas. Let me tell the House what the view of the last Labour Government was about gas. Then we can judge the validity of the criticisms that Labour Members are now making. They said:

"Our objective, as a Government, has been to seek to do all that we can in the national interest to develop gas and oil resources in the North Sea . . . That is the basis of a great future of this country. As we move towards the 1980s, we shall be an energy-strong country. We shall be the most important country, in energy terms, in Western Europe, and one of the most well-based in the world."

At that point, an intrepid hon. Gentleman asked, "At what cost?", to which the response was:

"That is a concept for the faint hearts of the Conservative Party to ponder."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1975; Vol. 902, c. 163.]

Who announced that bold policy of allowing gas its head? It was not, this time, the wild optimism of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield; he is guiltless of that statement. It was a then much more humble figure—the Minister of State, Department of Energy, our old friend, the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not the case that the more rope the President of the Board of Trade is given, the more likely he is to hang himself? Are we not meant to be discussing future energy policy? Is it not the case that he will be consigned to the history books, just as he is now talking about policy of 20 years ago? What matters is now.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Heseltine: The House will have listened to the debate and to the exchange that we had on Thursday and a wider audience will have listened to the way in which the Labour party has abandoned all that it did when it was in power as though there were a simple way forward.

There is a speech that every right hon. and hon. Member should read. It was made on 20 October last year by Lord Marsh in another place.

Mr. Skinner: He is a Tory.

Mr. Heseltine: That is their answer: he is a Tory. If he is a Tory, it may well be because he has sat in a Cabinet with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and learnt the arrant nonsense that was discussed there. Let me quote Lord Marsh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the President of the Board of Trade, but he may not quote speeches made in the other place unless they were made by a Minister. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman can paraphrase.

Mr. Heseltine: I recognise your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. The fact that Lord Marsh should say that the social devastation of what happened under a Labour Government, when he was a Labour Minister, should not be forgotten must rank as a serious part of the discussion about how one judges the integrity of the Labour party.

And so—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is also a rule of the House that, even though one may disagree violently with the hon. Gentleman who is speaking, one at least gives him a hearing.

Mr. Heseltine: It is not that the Opposition disagree with me, Madam Deputy Speaker; it is that they do not want the facts paraded. The Labour party cannot stand the facts because they do not square with the argument that it puts forward today. However, we shall reveal just what the Labour party did when it had the power to deal with these matters.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State is talking to us about facts. I faxed a letter to the right hon. Gentleman at 7.30 last night in which I asked him to clarify the statement that he made on Thursday, which put 800 miners in my constituency out of work. They were producing some of the cheapest coal at one of the most modern coal mines in the world. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to answer my questions. Must I listen to a diatribe that has nothing to do with the well-being of miners?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member well knows that that is not a point or order for the Chair. The Chair is not responsible for the substance of speeches.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) refers to Maltby, a mine which British Coal has said that it is considering developing. That will attract investment of £29 million net and extend the life of the pit into the next century.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my right hon. Friend recall that in October 1992 I asked him about the inbuilt discrimination against coal in the Electricity Act 1989, the measure which privatised the electricity industry? He gave me an assurance that he would consider that "inbuilt discrimination" as part of his review. Has he done that? If he has, and has found the discrimination that I believe to exist, why is he not acting to produce a level playing field between coal, gas and nuclear power?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend must be fully aware, as the Select Committee determined and as I have made clear, that we are considering an immensely complex range of options. I have listed the areas in which we are helping British Coal, both with a subsidy to help it bid for markets and by widening the market for coal. It is a naive interpretation of what has happened to believe that British Coal has not received subsidies over recent years. There is about £1 billion a year of subsidy over and above world market prices in British Coal's current costs, and there was about £18 billion-worth of investment in British Coal in the 1980s. I cannot accept what my hon. Friend has said.

We have provided British Coal with the opportunity to earn additional tonnage through supplemental contracts. We have given it the opportunity to compete. We have provided it with a wider market. Without Government action, that market would not be there. What has been the response of the National Union of Mineworkers? It wants to call a strike. Does the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, believe that the NUM serves its interests by going on strike? What will the customers of British Coal think if they see the industry going on strike at the very time when we are giving it a chance to compete in larger marketplaces?

We have made it clear that the best hope for British Coal is to take advantage of the opportunities that we have provided and to move towards the private sector. We have seen privatised industry after industry move on to the world stage and win new markets. That has been the success of the 1980s. We want British Coal to seize the opportunities that are there.

All we have from the Labour party——

Mr. Redmond: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: From the Labour party we hear only references to the past and to subsidies. It continues to look backwards. That is all that it does. The House has heard its message, which has nothing to do with a viable and competitive British industry. I am sick and tired of listening to Opposition Members telling me what their fathers thought, what their grandfathers thought, and

[Mr. Heseltine]

what their great grandfathers thought. We are concerned about what their children will think if we do not make the economy competitive. We are not trying to build a land for the fathers of Opposition Members but we are determined to build a land for their children.

4.39 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'declines to approve the White Paper, The Prospects for Coal, on the grounds that it fails to provide a long-term future for any of the 31 pits announced for closure on 13th October or to secure a contract for a single extra ton of coal above those contracts available on 13th October; notes that the reduction in contracts for coal is a product of the distorted market created by Her Majesty's Government on the privatisation of electricity and regrets the failure of the White Paper to open up the electricity market to fair competition from coal; records its surprise that despite a new subsidy on the purchase of coal Her Majesty's Government has not obtained any commitment from the generating companies to purchase more coal; is concerned that the White Paper will impose severe hardship on the communities around the 19 pits to be closed immediately and the further 12 pits liable to close within three years; recognises that the British Coal industry is the cheapest and most efficient in Europe; congratulates the management and workforce of the 31 pits on their achievement in doubling productivity within eight years while reducing the price of their coal; and calls for a balanced energy strategy that maintains existing volumes of coal production.'.

I understand why the President of the Board of Trade did not spend the bulk of his speech talking about his White Paper. Having read it, I think that he was probably right not to do so. I also think, however, that on this occasion he could have spared the House his portrayal of a pantomime villain. I have shadowed the right hon. Gentleman for long enough to know that he plays it for the boos and the hisses—that that is what gives him his high. Hon. Members should not misunderstand me; there is a place for pantomime villains. As a child of 10, I loved to boo and hiss them as much as the next person. But the place for a pantomime villain is on the pantomime stage, not on the Floor of the House introducing a report that seals the fate of a major strategic industry and the jobs of 30,000 grown men—men of dignity and courage, who deserve better of the right hon. Gentleman than his vamping performance today.

The right hon. Gentleman has spent five months on his review, being as self-indulgent as his performances in the House. The critical reason why he has failed to come up with a long-term solution to the problem of the pits in Britain is simple. Why has he not produced a White Paper that gives a future to those 31 pits? Has he never thought that he was wrong in wanting to close them in the first place?

I thought that, after Thursday's statement, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) asked the most penetrating and revealing question of all. He asked the President of the Board of Trade to confirm that his conclusion was

"that the economic analysis that my right hon. Friend made last year was right then and is right now."

Modestly, the right hon. Gentleman replied:

"my hon. Friend is right."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 1250.]

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way in a moment.

We could not have had a clearer answer. The thousands of people who wrote to Conservative Members last October were wrong; the quarter of a million who marched to Hyde park for the miners were wrong; the 1 million who signed petitions for the pits were wrong. They had all got it wrong. The right hon. Gentleman knew better than they and was not going to change his policy.

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Gentleman had gone on to remind the House of the rest of the exchange that he quoted, hon. Members would recall that I said that we had taken care of the social consequences of an economic analysis that had not changed.

While the hon. Gentleman ponders on that, may I ask him a question? Will he repudiate strike action on the part of the miners, or does he actually believe that it expands the market for coal?

Mr. Cook: I shall have something to say about strike action in a moment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer!"] I shall answer the hon. Gentleman in the course of my speech, but let me say first that we did not come here to debate the social consequences of closing pits; we came here to debate how those pits could be kept open. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows the rules.

Mr. Cook: I shall not answer the hon. Gentleman's question; I shall answer the President of the Board of Trade, who asked the same question. His question deserves an answer.

The right hon. Gentleman's statement last October did for Arthur Scargill what none of us believed possible: it made him more popular than the current Prime Minister. His statement last week has now achieved something that Arthur Scargill himself never achieved: it has persuaded the Union of Democratic Mineworkers to ballot for industrial action. That is the scale of the betrayal felt by those who work in the pits—not just members of the National Union of Mineworkers, but UDM members. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are barracking, asking from a sedentary position whether we support such action. If they support us tonight in defeating the White Paper, there will be no need for a strike.

The President of the Board of Trade has spent five months on his review and in that time he has learnt nothing.

Mr. Heseltine: Why does not the hon. Gentleman answer the question?

Mr. Cook: With respect, I have already answered it. I fully understand and share the anger of those who were led to believe that there would be a solution and now find that there is none.

The President of the Board of Trade may have learnt nothing in the course of those five months, but at least he started off knowing rather more than his Prime Minister, who accused me on Tuesday of wanting to fossilise coal. I hate to admit that I have ever been beaten to action, but I must tell the Prime Minister that 1,000 ft of pressure have beaten me to it by 1 million years. How can we take

seriously a review of the coal industry's future from a Government who still do not understand that they are dealing with a fossil fuel? We cannot take it seriously, because the right hon. Gentleman has not come up with one extra bag of coal to be bought from the pits that he claims to have saved.

Let us be objective and let us be fair to the President of the Board of Trade. That was the test that he set himself and put to the House repeatedly: his task was to secure an extra market for coal. In his speech, he asked what those who go down the pits will think of Opposition Members. Let me point out that they do not include him, for he has not been down a single pit in the course of his review. When I asked him, during Question Time last week, why that was, he replied that his presence was more important where those who can enter into contracts with British Coal may be found.

That was the test that the right hon. Gentleman set himself: where could he find extra contracts for British Coal? According to that very test, his White Paper is a failure. It does not contain a single contract for a single extra bag of coal.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): What would those who go down the pits have felt if my right hon. Friend had not been able to announce today that he had secured the core contract?

Mr. Cook: They told him what they felt on 13 October, when he announced precisely the same core contract as he has announced this week. There has not been an advance of as much as 1 million tonnes on the contract that justified his decision to close the 31 pits. Now, five months later, we are asked to accept that the same tonnage will save 12 of those pits.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I have given way already.

The right hon. Gentleman's argument is that, by providing British Coal with a subsidy that brings down the price of the coal at the pits concerned to that of imports, the Government will be able to replace imports with the output of those pits.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Cook: No; I want to finish this section of my speech.

The problem with that logic is that the output of the 12 pits exceeds the total volume of imports. In the year now ending, they have produced 13 million tonnes. Next year, Britain is expected to import 9 million tonnes for electricity generation. Contracts have already been signed for 2 million of those tonnes, leaving a balance of only 7 million tonnes. Even if the output from those pits displaced every last tonne of imports for which no contract has yet been signed, there would be room only for 7 million tonnes, or the output of half the 12 pits that the President of the Board of Trade claims to have saved.

That is the position this year; next year will be worse. Next year, the core contracts go down from 40 million to 30 million tonnes. In that year, British Coal will have to find extra output not just for the 13 million tonnes from the 12 pits, but for the additional 10 million tonnes lost on the core contract. That is a total of 23 million tonnes. Yet, in that year, the total volume of imports expected is only 10 million tonnes. How will a subsidy help British Coal to find the other 13 million tonnes? If it does not find them, how will the 12 pits stay open beyond next April? I will give way to the President of the Board of Trade if he will answer that question.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): As well as asking that vital question, will my hon. Friend ask another? What credence can we give to the process of consultation about the 10 pits that are not even included in any of the figures? If my hon. Friend's figures are right, what hope or belief can there be in the integrity of the whole inquiry and consultation process, which could save Taff Merthyr and other collieries among the 10?

Mr. Cook: There has been no offer to privatise them; it has been a clear-out sale.

The President of the Board of Trade has had time to think of his answer, so I shall give way to him. Now that we have demonstrated that the output of those 12 pits exceeds imports, can the right hon. Gentleman explain to us where the market is for their output? Who is going to buy the 13 million tonnes?

Mr. Heseltine: It is apparent that the hon. Gentleman has not read the Select Committee's report. Its whole essence pointed to a range of ways in which there would be a larger market. I have followed the Select Committee's principal recommendations, to enable British Coal to meet that marketplace.

Mr. Cook: The principal recommendation was recommendation 17. The President of the Board of Trade is right, but recommendation 17 did not simply say, bring in a subsidy. Recommendation 17 said, bring in a subsidy and make it conditional on the electricity companies purchasing the additional tonnage. The right hon. Gentleman, in a negotiation process that would stun any union leader, has given the subsidy to the electricity companies, which they have taken, but in return they have made no commitment to buy one bag of coal.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does the hon. Gentleman have in mind a figure for the compensation that would have to be paid to British Gas if it was made to tear up its contracts with the generators?

Mr. Cook: I should have more respect for the hon. Gentleman's question if British Gas could guarantee a supply of gas to domestic gas consumers. British Gas has entered into interruptible contracts with the power stations, which means that they can interrupt the contract for gas for 55 days a year. Those 55 days will be during the winter, when British Gas needs gas for domestic consumers. I do not see why we should allow British Gas and independent producers to back us into a national energy strategy which would mean that for 55 days in the winter we were vulnerable to disruption of supplies.

Arithmetic is plainly not the right hon. Gentleman's strong point. We have still had no answer from him. Where will the extra tonnes go? For that matter, where did the figure of 12 pits come from? If the President of the Board of Trade has not identified the market for those 13 million tonnes, how did he arrive at the figure of 12 pits saved? I think I have a clue which provides the explanation. The clue was provided by the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, the hon. Member

[Mr. Cook]

for Hatton—*[Interruption.]* I apologise. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). Tatton, I am bound to say, sounds much more appropriate to the hon. Gentleman.

Last Tuesday, the Minister for Energy was due to address the World Coal Institute. Last Tuesday, the Minister had other things on his mind, so he sent his hon. Friend the Member for Tatton, who was introduced as having a background in coal and opencast mining, which interested the rest of us. As he left, the hon. Member for Tatton was doorstepped. He was asked about the prospects of success for the White Paper. His reply was, "We are mining a rich seam of support on the Back Benches."

I suspect that in that reply there was more truth than we heard in an hour today from the President of the Board of Trade. The figure of 12 pits has nothing to do with the consequences of the subsidy, or with any calculation of what the market is for extra output. The calculation behind the figure of 12 pits is, simply, what is necessary to get Tory Back Benchers into the same Lobby as the Minister. It is a figure that owes nothing to Boyds, or Caminus, or to the other consultants. That figure was chosen by the Patronage Secretary and expresses his total knowledge of the mining industry. It is the figure that he needs to turn rebels into loyalists. I urge those loyalists not to be taken in by that. The Government are not mining a seam of support on their Back Benches; they are digging a pit for their Back Benchers to fall into, because one year from now none of those 12 pits will be open.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): On the subject of rebels, the hon. Gentleman calls in his amendment for existing volumes of coal production to be maintained. That implies that the Connah's Quay power station will not get the go-ahead and that the several thousand jobs tied up with that power station will not be realised. Is the hon. Gentleman telling his hon. Friend the Member Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), whose constituents stand to benefit from some 2,000 to 3,000 jobs, that he should vote against the creation of those jobs and should support his party?

Mr. Cook: I have already had correspondence with the management in charge of the Connah's Quay project. I have said to them that I see no reason to disagree with the proposal to use sour gas, which cannot be used for domestic heating.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman is splitting hairs.

Mr. Cook: No, I am not splitting hairs. Our concern is that gas, which is perfectly capable of domestic use, could more efficienty be used for domestic purposes than turned into electricity.

If any of the rebels are in doubt, I urge them to look at the White Paper. It does not talk about saving 12 pits. The White Paper, crafted by civil servants, is more honest than the President of the Board of Trade has been with the House. Paragraph 13.8 says:

> "The Government has therefore concluded that there is a case for enabling British Coal to phase the inevitable closures needed . . . More pits will be kept open for longer in the interim."

There is not talk there of a permanent solution—only of phasing and only of the interim. If the President of the Board of Trade and the House really want to provide a long-term future for those pits, what they have to do is what the right hon. Gentleman has failed to do: tackle the rigged market, which is squeezing coal out of the chance to compete.

The President of the Board of Trade was good enough to quote from British Coal's press release when he made his announcement last Thursday. It is a pity that he did not quote from the following paragraph, which said:

> "In its evidence to the Department of Trade and Industry inquiry"—

that is, to the right hon. Gentleman—

> "British Coal made clear its view that only a radical transformation of the market would affect the prospects for collieries threatened with closure."

That was British Coal's view: that only a radical transformation of the market would do that.

It is no good the right hon. Gentleman saying to us that it would be wrong to intervene in the market. This Government intervened only four years ago to create the rigged market. What is wrong now with intervening, when we see how it is working? [HON. MEMBERS : "It is not working."] The President of the Board of Trade could have done a number of things, had he wanted to correct the market.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I am not going to give way to the hon. Gentleman. I gave way to him last week, and it turned out that he did not even know the unemployment figures for his own constituency. My advice to the hon. Gentleman is that he should return to his constituency, spend some time there and, when he is knowledgeable enough, come back here and then intervene in debates.

The biggest failure in the White Paper is that the President of the Board of Trade has not accepted any of the recommendations of the Select Committee about how to change the rigged market. That, I presume, is why the Government have not tabled a procedural motion that would have enabled us to vote on the amendment in the name of the Chairman of the Select Committee. In that way, the House would have had the opportunity to endorse those recommendations which the right hon. Gentleman has ignored.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the President of the Board of Trade's attempt to suggest that the White Paper effectively follows the Select Committee's recommendations is a misrepresentation and a fundamental divergence from the Select Committee's recommendations? The hon. Gentleman has already said that the White Paper does not allude to the rigged market. In addition, the Select Committee's recommendation that there should be a subsidy for coal is conditional upon securing extra contracts. The President of the Board of Trade's White Paper has not made one iota of difference. He has done nothing to secure those contracts.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman has made his own point and I hope that he will speak later in the debate. I agree very much with him.

As for the Select Committee's recommendations which the President of the Board of Trade has ignored, he could have accepted the recommendation that the nuclear levy be paid to an independent trust. Then we would know that

it had been set aside for decommissioning costs and that it was not being used to cover Nuclear Electric's current costs. If Nuclear Electric can compete, fine; good luck to it. But it is not entitled to a subsidy five times larger than the right hon. Gentleman's subsidy to the coal industry. Nuclear Electric's subsidy is so large that if it were given to British Coal, it could deliver almost half its coal to the power stations free of charge. The most extraordinary feature of this subsidy is that we pay it to the French as well. That is why we are now importing so much electricity from France, more expensive electricity from France than from British Coal or British Gas. The electricity companies buy it only because they can claim the subsidy that goes to nuclear power on French imports.

The President has once again today tried to explain that this is all the fault of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). The President is only here at the Dispatch Box to carry out the policies left in place by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield—a commitment to continuity in energy policy which I had not hitherto suspected of the Government. I will therefore give the House a brief history of the interconnector.

As the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) was good enough to tell the House last week, the interconnector began life in negotiations under a Conservative Government. What happened in 1978 was that my right hon. Friend gave capital borrowing consent for the interconnector. The President's charge is that my right hon. Friend had not wrapped up the details of the contract. Hardly surprising, because there was no contract. The President has deposited in the Library a summary of the legal advice that he has received on the interconnector. Its opening paragraph explains when the contract came into being. It says:

"The framework for the operation [of the interconnector] is governed by a Protocol entered into on 16th June 1981."

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield has an alibi for his whereabouts in June 1981. It was impossible to go to any meeting of 10 people in the Labour movement in 1981 without finding my right hon. Friend addressing it —he was not negotiating with the French over a protocol for the interconnector.

Nor, may I say, is that the real problem with the interconnector. The turning point of its history does not come until 1989, the year when the Government gave Electricité de France the right to qualify for the nuclear subsidy. The Government, having given that subsidy, could have accepted the recommendation of the Select Committee to remove it. To be fair to the President, he sent the Minister of State across to Paris to talk to the French and explore the problem. I have here the press release which he issued that day and I shall share with the House the very first sentence, the thing that the Minister of State felt was most important and should go at the beginning of his press release:

"I made it clear that the Government recognised that it was not legally possible to prevent the importation of French-generated electricity via the link."

Picture the scene, Madam Speaker. We have a Minister who is sent to France to negotiate for British interests. What is the first thing that he does? It is cheerfully to tell the French that he has not got a legal leg to stand on. I have tried hard to picture the same scene in reverse. I have tried to picture a French Minister landing at Heathrow and, as he lands, saying that he recognises that it is not legally possible to get what he is asking for. I have failed to capture this picture in my mind's eye.

The President told me last week that I was blaming the French. I do not blame the French Government. The French have a Government who stick up for France and good luck to them. I just wish that we had a Government who stuck up for Britain.

But the biggest reason why coal is being squeezed out of the market is not nuclear, it is not the French; it is because, since privatisation, these Ministers have licensed a whole new generation of gas-fired power stations in the full knowledge that every time they signed a licence they were shutting three coal pits. On their plans, five years from now Britain will generate more electricity from gas than from coal. That is why the Select Committee floated the recommendation that the outputs from those gas power stations should be changed to mid-merit and to peak rather than following baseload.

Mr. Churchill: Yes.

Mr. Cook: I am glad that I have the support of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on this point.

On energy grounds, that is very attractive. When it comes to energy strategy, it is daft to put gas through power stations to turn it into electricity for baseload. The most sensible thing is to pump it directly to heat homes and factories. The most wasteful thing to do with it is to put it through a power station first, because that way one loses half the heat, not heating factories or homes but heating cooling towers. It would make sense when it comes to our national resources as well.

To achieve this massive switch from coal to gas, we shall divert one third of the output of North sea gas into electricity generation. There is one clear consequence of that: North sea gas reserves will run out one third faster. When they do, we will be dependent on imported gas to keep the light bulbs burning. Gas on the international market comes from countries which are by-words for political instability, such as Algeria and Russia. A key event occurred in the course of the energy review which should oblige the President to rethink this strategy. Two months ago Russia increased the price of the gas that it exports to Germany by one third.

There is a danger that we are repeating the errors of the 1960s and early 1970s when we relied on imported oil because it was cheap; when we became reliant, it was no longer cheap. When we find that we are reliant on imported gas, we will find that it is no longer cheap. But we need not become reliant on imports of gas if we conserve our own fuel assets and that should be the concern of a Secretary of State for Energy. The cost of his White Paper will be the loss of half our present coal reserves. That is what is at stake. The most revealing figures in the Boyds report are that half the coal reserves to which we have access are in the 31 pits at risk. There is a cost to the nation that should concern the Secretary of State with responsibility for energy.

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No. I have explained my position already: when the hon. Gentleman has done his homework and comes back to the House, we will let him in.

The right hon. Gentleman is also Secretary of State for Industry. There is another cost here that should concern

[Mr. Cook]

him. His White Paper has just put under the hammer another slice of manufacturing industry. Because Britain has the largest coal industry in Europe, it has the best mining engineering industry, too. It is a big export earner for Britain—£400 million in contracts won by the mining engineering industry last year. It, too, is at risk now. The Association of Mining Equipment Companies warned on Friday that

"a sizeable and stable home market is essential for continuing international success."

The industry will no longer have it and the association expects that jobs in the mining equipment industry will shrink from 22,000 to 13,000. Factories in places far away from coalfields, in places that will not see any of the measures which the right hon. Gentleman announced today to help the coalfields, will be affected.

There is a final cost that should concern the right hon. Gentleman as President of the Board of Trade. Next time he sits as President of the Board of Trade—possibly in lonely splendour because, as far as we can work out, there has never been a meeting at which anyone else has turned up—he should reflect on the cost to the balance of payments of the White Paper. Five years ago this country was self-sufficient in carbon fuels. The damning indictment of the Government's lack of an energy strategy is that by the first quarter of next century we will be importing three quarters of our primary fuels—this is an island built on coal which could still be surrounded by gas if hon. Members on the Government Benches were not so anxious to hurry up the burning.

The rest of Europe must think that we are mad. If any of them had the coal reserves that we have, none of them would be shutting down those reserves. They would be regarded as a national asset. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are."] Conservative Members say that they are. On the figures in the White Paper, in the next four years Germany, which has smaller coal reserves, will have a bigger mining industry than Britain.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose——*

Mr. Cook: No, I will not give way. And it costs the Germans three times as much to mine that coal.

Here I come to the point which I find it most difficult to forgive.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose——*

Mr. Cook: No, I want to finish.

Here I come to the point for which I find it most difficult to forgive the right hon. Gentleman. He is closing not just some of the largest coal reserves in Europe, but some of the most efficient pits in Europe. I have seen them. They are pits which have had millions of pounds invested in them, investment that will now be left to buckle under pressure and be buried under roof fall. They are pits where miners have doubled productivity in the past eight years. They are pits where we have reduced the price of coal by one sixth in the past five years and could reduce it by one sixth in the next five years. How many other industries have doubled productivity and cut prices in the past five years?

The right hon. Gentleman is fond of accusing us of running Britain down, yet here is one of the best success stories of British industry, and he is running it down. He is running down not only the pits but the communities around them, communities which were built there only because the coal was found there, communities whose only economic purpose is to provide coal for the nation, communities which will be shattered if that purpose is taken from them.

It is not only members of the Opposition who know that—some Conservative Members know it. Many of them gave promises to those communities last October. Today is the day they have to deliver on those promises, not at the end of the year when the first of the 12 pits closes and not next year when the last of the 12 pits closes. It will be too late to save those communities then. The time to save them is tonight.

The right hon. Gentleman has taken five months to find a solution to give real hope to those pits and he has failed. The House now has five hours in which to record its verdict on the White Paper. I beg hon. Members of all parties not to fail those communities, as the right hon. Gentleman has done, and, when the vote is called, to reject a White Paper that betrays those communities and betrays Britain's coal industry.

5.10 pm

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): I intend to be brief, so I hope that colleagues will forgive me if I do not give way very often, if at all.

As the first member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to be called in the debate, I must make it my first duty to convey our thanks to all the staff who worked so very hard to produce the report which is before the House and whose conclusions have been taken so seriously by the Government in the White Paper.

We had a daunting task to perform, under considerable pressure of time. It is a great tribute to the experts helping us and to the staff of the Committee who made our work possible that we produced a report in such a coherent form in such a remarkably short time. At the same time, I must say that there are passages in the report—other members of the Select Committee will possibly agree—where our conclusions did not carry the stamp of detailed and lengthy consideration. Parts of the report are, by nature, in the form of a communiqué rather than of a report. There are forms of words evolved late at night, on the last night available to consider them, because we had to formulate an agreement to disagree.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Very well put.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am glad to have the agreement of the Chairman of the Select Committee. It is important that the House knows where the agreements to disagree are and should not put excessive faith in some of the forms of words in the report.

I am in no way dissenting from the main drift of the report, any more than the Government have dissented from it. We formulated the proposition that there should be a subsidy. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) disagrees with that idea, but the most important point is that the industry should have time—if necessary, time should be bought for the industry—to try to solve the problems that the House had identified and which it wanted solved, but it is an exaggeration to present the report to the House as it if were a carefully knit, coherent set of 39 separate recommendations, every one of which had to be accepted or the whole would fail. I deal briefly with one or two of the report's recomendations.

The Select Committee recommended that

"the Government consider financial assistance to contracts undertaken in the non-ESI market up to a maximum level of 3 million tonnes per annum for five years."

In response to that recommendation, in paragraph 16.15 of the White Paper, the Government rightly state:

"British Coal made it clear in its evidence to the Review that it is likely to continue to be constrained by insufficient supplies of the grades and quality of coal required by the non-power sector. It does not expect price to be an obstacle to selling the relevant types of coal."

On that basis, and understandably, the White Paper states:

"The Government has, therefore, concluded that a subsidy would be unlikely to increase British Coal sales to the non-electricity generation market."

It is important that that fact is recognised, and it was recognised in the Select Committee's report. The reason the recommendation appears in the final version is that some members of the Select Committee perceived a need for the extra market to be presented as being as much as 19 million tonnes.

Mr. Caborn: May I refresh the right hon. Gentleman's memory about that debate in the Select Committee? I think that the 3 million tonnes came out of the original debate on 21 October during an intervention by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on the President of the Board of Trade. Great play was made of the fact that Leeds city council, a Labour authority, was buying Colombian coal. If the right hon. Gentleman remembers, we scratched below the surface in the Select Committee and said how ridiculous it was that local authorities, and indeed health authorities, were having to buy imported coal because, if they did not buy the cheapest coal, the district auditor would be on their backs, telling them that they were acting illegally. We took an objective view of that and said that, even though the Government had placed those constraints on the authorities, we could assist them and assist the mining industry to find the larger market for coal. That was the logic behind the 3 million tonnes.

Sir Cranley Onslow: It may have been the argument, but it was not necessarily logical. It may have escaped the hon. Gentleman's memory that we did not test the proposition by calling evidence on it. British Coal's statement that it did not regard price as a constraint on the selling of non-electricity supply industry coal is contained in the review and must be accepted. It is necessary for some of the exaggerated expectations——

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): The right hon. Gentleman is saying that the argument was not logical, but it was the argument that was used. Will he confirm that he accepted it when he signed the report?

Sir Cranley Onslow: I accepted the report which said that the Government should "consider" the recommendation. I deliberately prefaced my remarks with the comment that it was a form of words, evolved under pressure at the last minute in an effort to pretend that there was agreement. I do not wish the House to be misled about the strength of the structure of those words. Labour Members put more strength on the structure than it will bear.

In an article in *The House Magazine*, the Chairman of the Select Committee uses the extra 19 million tonnes as the minimum expectation in relation to the additional market that is to be secured. We were talking about what additional market there might be; we were not making promises. We had not tested the projections by asking the generators whether they would buy, or by asking British Coal if it thought that it could sell——

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Cranley Onslow: No, there is a limit to the extent to which the debate can become an argument among members of the Select Committee. I have a strong suspicion that other hon. Members also want to participate, which is why I want to be brief.

The article to which the Chairman of the Select Committee put his name is misleading, because it suggests that British Coal's market could be expanded

"beyond the additional 19 million tonnes."

It is especially unwise to have used as an argument to support that the proposition that using combined cycle gas turbines

"as mid-merit or peak capacity"

was something on which the Committee had agreed and which would achieve that purpose. I shall deal with that point next.

At paragraph 23, the Government respond to the Select Committee's recommendation that

"The Government should explore the possibility of some of the CCGTs being used as mid-merit or peak instead of baseload capacity."

The important words are "should explore". No member of the Select Committee objected to the Government exploring the possibility. However, no member of the Committee had sufficient evidence on which to base an expectation of what the result of that exploration would be.

At paragraph 250(iii), we cite as an option

"Restricting the operation of CCGTs, so that they are not permanently on baseload."

We then make the important point that

"There is a cost involved, which we have not been able to assess."

On the basis of pressure of time, we recommended that

"The Government should explore the possibility of some of the CCGTs being used as mid-merit or peak instead of baseload".

We had had no evidence on that subject, and we had no costs to put before anybody. It is important that the House should have some opportunity to know what costs may be involved. I asked Enron, one of the companies that gave evidence to the Select Committee, as the Chairman will recall, whether it could help on the matter. Enron's reply says:

"The costs of not running CCGT plant in the most efficient way would fall in some combination upon four groups."

The groups are listed as the consumer, who would be forced to buy higher-priced electricity from less efficient coal-fired stations, the generator, the gas supplier and the gas processor. All four would have in some degree to bear a cost. Enron quantifies its view by saying:

"If 10,000 MW of CCGT were affected the annual cost of a reduction in load factor to 75 per cent. could exceed £250 million."

I doubt whether, if the Committee had had that evidence before it, it would have framed its recommendation in precisely the way that it did.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his careful and revealing explanation of where one of the recommendations came from. Did the Select Committee take into account the loss of confidence that might apply

[Mr. Heseltine]

to companies investing in the North sea if it was felt that contracts that had been freely entered into were to be overturned as a result of the recommendation?

Sir Cranley Onslow: I cannot speak for every member of the Select Committee. However, I can assure my right hon. Friend that that consideration was very much in my mind and in the minds of a number of my colleagues. None of us——

Mr. Cabom: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Cranley Onslow: I am sorry to say that I will not. I am reasonably confident that the hon. Gentleman will be called, so I shall take a chance on that. I ask him to be patient.

I am fairly sure that we should not have accepted the recommendation if we had known that the costs involved, in financial and in psychological or economic terms, were likely to be what they can now be seen to be. I should be surprised if even Opposition Members would have been prepared to sign up to such a recommendation.

I hope that we have been of help to the House in our report, but I point out that there are areas that should still be approached with caution. There was a need to have more work done than was possible because of time pressure. In that respect, I commend the Government's response in the White Paper because it deals with matters in a careful and reasoned way.

Some of the accusations of indecision and delay which have been levelled against my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade are thoroughly unjustified. The Select Committee had no chance to call the coal generators before it and to ask what they would do if they had the opportunity to buy subsidised coal, how much of it they would buy and how long they would negotiate about it.

No one, least of all the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) who has so much experience of negotiation, should be surprised that the process should have been protracted, and that an answer should not have been arrived at until the very last minute. For the hon. Member for Livingstone to accuse my right hon. Friend of wasting time entirely reveals his ignorance of what is involved. It was critical that there should be signatures on contracts, and it was necessary and inevitable that it should take that length of time to secure those signatures.

The other very important recommendation made by the Select Committee is the emphasis on improved productivity and working practices. I regret that we had to place so much emphasis on those matters, because they should have been dealt with years ago. There can be no possible excuse for the antiquated and antediluvian working practices that restrain productivity in so much of mining, except where safety is involved.

If safety is not involved—we received clear assurances on this from British Coal and others—the improved working practices should have been secured years ago. If they had been, I have little doubt that the strength of the industry and the markets it could command would be infinitely greater than they are today. It is the attitude of the reactionary and politically motivated unions as much as anything else which has prevented the industry from realising its true potential.

Mr. Cormack: Not the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Sir Cranley Onslow: I exempt the UDM, which has not been responsible for trade union relations in the industry over the past 20 years. If it had been, things might well have been different.

The important thing is to look forward, and to recognise that there is now an opportunity for the coal industry to be saved by the exertions of those who work within it. It will involve management, which requires the infusion of privatised ability and privatised motivation, because British Coal alone cannot be relied on to do what needs to be done. It will involve labour. I hope and believe that many miners still believe in their industry and will welcome the opportunity that privatisation can give. Above all, it will involve those who want to sell coal. If British Coal cannot be confident of meeting and beating foreign competition, it is a sad day for the industry.

This has been a long drawn out and painful process for the House and for all those involved. I commend my right hon. Friend on the way in which he has dealt with these difficult matters. I commend him for the conclusions in his White Paper, and I believe that the House should give those conclusions its full support tonight.

5.27 pm

Mr. Richard Cabom (Sheffield, Central): I join the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) in expressing appreciation for the work of the staff of the Select Committee. They did a sterling job, and their dedication and professionalism were shown admirably during the very long hours involved. No member of the Select Committee had a gun held at his head to make him sign the report. All members signed of their own free will, and those who wanted to abstain were able to do so. The report was carried nem con.

I shall pick up one or two of the points made by the right hon. Member for Woking, who seems to have rewritten the Select Committee report. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the combined cycle gas turbines. The figure of £250 million having been lost by the gas generators—I have not seen the letter to which the right hon. Gentleman referred—was arrived at on the basis that coal was by far the cheapest way in which to generate electricity. To paraphrase: "They would, wouldn't they?"

The figure of 19 million tonnes of coal for which we suggested support could be provided was based partly on the ESI market and partly on the non-ESI market. We made that recommendation against the background of the fact that, when the regional electricity companies came before our Committee, a number of them said that, within the ESI market, there would be a market for between 15 million and 20 million tonnes beyond the coal contract. That is on the record for all to see.

Finally, on the productivity of our pits, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has said that productivity in British mines has increased partly because of our superb engineering skills. The suppliers are now producing about £1 billion-worth of engineering goods, of which £400 million-worth is exported. They tell us unequivocally that their export capability will be lost if they do not have a home market of sufficient size to enable them to develop the best range of mining equipment in the world. When we talk about improving our manufacturing base, we ought to remember that some of the best

technology and engineering goes into our mines and that that will be lost to British industry if, over the next few years, the critical mass falls to the level that is predicted.

The Government's White Paper and the Select Committee report are both published by HMSO, but that is where the similarity ends. When the President of the Board of Trade announced the pit closures last autumn, he said that they were necessary because there was not a market for British deep-mined coal. We therefore considered ways in which to open the market for coal. Unfortunately, however, the right hon. Gentleman's White Paper looked for a way out of a political row. In 90 days, under full public scrutiny, 11 Members of Parliament —six Conservative, four Labour and one Liberal Democrat—found a future for coal. In nearly twice as long, and in near-total secrecy, all that the President of the Board of Trade found was a new way to manage the closure programme.

We should not find that surprising, bearing in mind the fact that, last October, the right hon. Gentleman warned us that the reprieve would be temporary and that any changes would be at the margin. He has certainly kept that promise. In the meantime, however, he has broken faith with the House and with the mining industry. If he never intended to do anything more than stave off some of the closures, he should have had either the courage to withstand the storm from his own side or the honesty to phase the closures there and then. He should not have subjected taxpayers to an expensive charade lasting five months and costing millions of pounds, and he should not have played a game of cat and mouse with the miners, whose families and communities depend for their livelihoods on decisions which, after months of prevarication, are being rushed through the House this evening.

Dr. Hampson: In all fairness, I think that the hon. Gentleman, as Chairman of the Select Committee, will accept that we tended to fudge a number of critical issues ourselves. It was extremely optimistic to suppose that there would be no imports from France. Even if we could restrict such imports, we would be unlikely to get the figure down to nought—a 6·5 per cent. difference.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we might like to think of adding the subsidy on the industrial side, but it is sulphur emission controls on industrial plants that are tightening the market on the industrial sector for coal. The hon. Gentleman should accept that most of our options were based on the most optimistic expectations.

Mr. Caborn: Whether they were optimistic or not, may I suggest that perhaps the most accurate and objective information and data before the Select Committee were those provided by the National Grid Company. We followed its predictions about the market for coal. We received a lot of information, and many people had axes to grind, but I do not believe that the carrier of electricity —the National Grid Company—had any axe to grind. The President of the Board of Trade refers to our being at the top end of the market. He should discuss that matter with the National Grid Company, because it is that company that gave us the figures on the basis of which we have made projections regarding the market up to 1998.

The Government have gone to some lengths to suggest that the White Paper is consistent with the Select Committee report. Indeed, I read this weekend that the White Paper adopts eight of the Select Committee's recommendations. Perhaps the President of the Board of Trade will elaborate on that, because my reading of the White Paper suggests that our proposals to open the market for coal by creating a level playing field in the energy market have been rejected almost without exception.

In case anyone should doubt that, I would point out that we recommended increasing coal sales to the electricity market by extending the RECs' franchise. That was rejected. We recommended extending coal sales to industrial and domestic markets; increasing coal stocks; using some gas for mid-merit and peak; curbing French imports; restricting and curtailing orimulsion beyond the levels that the President of the Board of Trade has specified; reducing opencasting; reforming the nuclear levy; achieving a balance between energy capacity and demand; ensuring that the regulator considers the long-term interests of the nation; and establishing an energy commission.

All those proposals were rejected. They were the main proposals in answer to the central question: "Is there a larger market for coal?", and, in rejecting those proposals, the right hon. Gentleman has rejected a strategy that would have laid the foundations for British Coal's survival and future prosperity, and the framework within which a balanced and secure energy policy could flourish. In short, those recommendations would have provided the answer to the question that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) asked of the President of the Board of Trade—which, unfortunately, the right hon. Gentleman did not answer: how can a balanced, secure energy policy be developed up to and beyond the 21st century?

Instead, we have a White Paper that hardly takes us an inch beyond where we were last October. In fact, the drafting of the White Paper could have considerably worse implications for the coal industry than the announcement of 13 October 1992. What we have is a change of tactic rather than a strategy—a scheme that swaps a redundancy big bang for the prolonged pain of closure. We have a device which may save the Secretary of State's face but will not save a single coal face, and which will result in the remaining pits facing even greater and more unfair competition than at present.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I respect the way in which the hon. Gentleman chaired the Select Committee inquiry and compliment him on it, but is he not being a little unfair in saying that the Secretary of State has rejected every recommendation of the Select Committee? Many of the recommendations have been included in the report. It is a travesty for the hon. Gentleman to say that we are no further forward than we were last October. It may be that all of us on the Select Committee would like to see more pits kept open, but the fact that 12 are to stay open, whereas last October none was to stay open, is something that the hon. Gentleman should not ignore.

Mr. Caborn: I did not say that all the recommendations had been rejected—merely that the core recommendations on the central question that was posed to the House on 13 October and 21 October last year—"Is there a larger market for coal?"—have been rejected by the Secretary of State. I say genuinely to the hon. Gentleman, who is well respected in the energy industry, that my honest belief is

[Mr. Caborn]

that the way in which the White Paper has been drafted will give a green light for licences that have been given out like confetti by his successor.

On CCGTs, we shall be moving from the projected 30 million tonnes of coal equivalent that we suggested would be around in 1998. That figure may nearly double. I am now very fearful that the White Paper will give the green light, and that the dash for gas will continue and accelerate. That is one of my concerns about the way in which the White Paper has been drafted.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Surely the hon. Gentleman is forgetting the evidence that was put to the Select Committee on that subject. The majority of people who have been concerned with what he calls the dash for gas said quite clearly that there is now over-capacity in generating, and that it is most unlikely that there will be any increase in gas-fired stations in the foreseeable future. That was made very clear to the Committee.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have now heard three interventions and two speeches from members of the Select Committee. I had hoped that we would have a balanced debate on a White Paper dealing with the future energy requirements of this country. I venture to request that we try to achieve that balance, so that we may reach a fair judgment of the situation and try to defend our constituents' interests.

Madam Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman will possess his soul in patience for a little longer, his wish will be granted.

Mr. Butterfill: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope that we can rely on your protection, and that those of us who served on the Select Committee and hear accounts of the Select Committee that bear no relation to what we recognise shall be entitled to intervene in the normal way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All hon. Members realise that it is for the hon. Member who has the floor to decide whether to give way. It is not a matter for the Chair or for any other hon. Member.

Mr. Caborn: I will try to keep my remarks as brief as possible. However, I must respond to the point raised by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). What he said was true in the context of the position when the Select Committee took evidence. However, the White Paper has inevitably changed matters.

The White Paper has downgraded the coal industry; it has not upgraded it as we expected it to. It has not answered the essential question whether the Government can, through political will and legislation, create a larger market for coal. Unfortunately, that is the area of the Select Committee report which the Government have not acknowledged. Indeed, they have walked away from that point. That is my view as a Back Bencher and the view that I hold having spent long and laborious hours as a member of the Select Committee. I am entitled to my own point of view on that.

Twelve pits are to be closed immediately, and six are to be mothballed, at an unknown cost and to a doubtful standard, if the care and maintenance programme carried out at the pits closed last October is anything to go by. One pit is for development, at least until it is privatised. According to the Government, the remaining 12 pits are to be reprieved. However, according to British Coal, even those 12 pits are likely to close by the end of this year.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The hon. Gentleman referred to the cost of mothballing pits. We were told in evidence that that would be about £1 million a year.

Mr. Caborn: That point is on the record.

The promised subsidy is entirely dependent on British Coal securing sales that exceed the 40 million tonnes already contracted. Bearing in mind the fact that the Government failed to secure a single extra tonne during the five months of wrangling, it is highly unlikely that British Coal will succeed where they failed. Even if it does, British Coal says that it is unlikely that the 12 reprieved pits will survive this year.

My analysis shows that all 31 pits—I believe that this is substantiated by many outside commentators—will close within two years at a cost of more than 32,000 jobs and around £2 billion. Eighteen pits will close almost immediately, throwing more than 18,000 miners on the dole.

The closure programme will cost the taxpayer more than it would cost to keep the pits open. Three hundred years of coal reserves will be lost for ever. We will become even more dependent on gas—which is not simply a less efficient electricity producer, but also a more expensive one—much of which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, will have to be imported.

According to a Rothschild report in September 1991, because the Government have refused to create a level playing field in the energy market or to restrain the dash for gas, in five years' time we will be left not with 19 pits, but with 12 to 14, instead of the present 50. We will also be struggling with a vast over-capacity problem.

The Government's sole strategy is privatisation. The President of the Board of Trade says that he will intervene to set the industry free by privatising. He says that competitive markets provide the best means of ensuring that the nation has access to secure, diverse and sustainable supplies of energy in the forms that people and business want and at a competitive price.

How can the right hon. Gentleman say that? What possible basis does he have for that claim? It was the privatisation of electricity and the model used by the Government that thrust us into the coal crisis. The right hon. Gentleman says that he cannot help coal, because he does not have the power to intervene in the market now when the industry is in the public sector. What will happen if there is a major imbalance in the market, prices begin to escalate or we become over-dependent on foreign energy supplies? As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, we might re-run Britain's energy problems of the 1970s and early 1980s.

If there was ever a case for it, this is one in respect of which the President of the Board of Trade should act on his own advice. As the right hon. Gentleman wrote in his book, "Challenge of Europe: Heseltine 1989"—

"responsible Government has a duty to recognise the international circumstances which make a mockery of open competition . . . intelligent politicians should stop pretending that industrial support is a doctrinal intrusion into the workings of the market place."

If the coal industry is to be subjected to market forces, it should at least be given a fighting chance in a fair market. There is simply no excuse for privatising without adjusting the current market, which is rigged against coal.

There is no reason to believe that we will be any better served by coal privatisation, and the frankly absurd way in which the Government have approached the coal sell-off suggests that there will be more chaos on the horizon. One does not need to be a City whiz kid to realise that we do not get a decent price or a decent buyer for an industry that has just received a Government health warning.

The taxpayer will get a rock-bottom price, possibly below the asset value of the pits. Few buyers can be expected to invest in an industry whose market is declining. There will be a field day for asset strippers. The taxpayer will have to pick up the pieces and the bill for the redundancies, benefit payments and knock-on job losses, while the new pit owners will cream off the coal subsidy.

Let me remind the House that the Trade and Industry Select Committee is Conservative-dominated. Whatever the vote tonight, the truth is that, when the Committee considered whether a larger market for coal was feasible, whether the Government had powers to create such a market and, crucially, whether the Government should act, the clear and unequivocal answer to those three questions was yes.

Sadly, hon. Members will not be given the chance to support the Select Committee's recommendations today, because the Government have refused to accept an amendment based on the Committee's recommendations. I can assume only that that means that the Government recognise the rationale and power of our recommendations and fear that they could not win the vote tonight if the House were given the choice between the White Paper and the Select Committee's recommendations.

Before anyone reminds me, as the right hon. Member for Woking did last week, that I do not own the Select Committee—that is absolutely true—I would like to say that, in speaking today, I did no more than support in the House the report that I signed in the Select Committee. I do no more and no less than that.

We all understand the desire to back our parties and the pressure that can be placed on us to do that. Despite that, when the Committee members set aside party political interests and honestly considered the issue with an open mind, they backed a package of reforms that would not only secure British Coal's medium to long-term security, but also lay the foundations for an energy strategy that could take us into the next century. There is nothing in the White Paper that lives up to the commitments that the Select Committee members made when they signed the report on 29 January 1992.

5.47 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me, and I will try to be brief, as I know that many other hon. Members want to speak. I wish to make only a few points.

I welcome the statement made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade last Thursday. In particular, I want to say how grateful we were that the views of the Select Committee were taken into account so carefully in all that the White Paper has to say.

That does not mean that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade accepted all the recommendations, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) has just said. However, my right hon. Friend considered all our recommendations and acted on those on which he was able to act, bearing in mind the fact that a Select Committee is a Committee of Back-Bench Members which makes recommendations with the best intentions; different from Government who have to implement practical proposals.

I have a reservation about the White Paper, and I am pleased to be able to voice it to my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, who is currently at the Dispatch Box. Many members of the Select Committee had hoped that we would be able to get a better deal in respect of the interconnector with France. We have followed everything that my hon. Friend the Minister has done, and we congratulate him on going to France and returning with a deal of sorts. The deal is certainly in the right direction. We will have improved exports to France, and we have an indication that imports from France will probably halve over the next six or seven years. That is certainly a move in the right direction.

We had hoped that the interconnector would be used once again for the purpose for which it was originally established—to balance demand between the two countries when we have different peak loadings, and bearing in mind the fact that our clocks are set at different times and therefore there is a chance to even up the loading in the two countries. The legal advice which the Government received shows that it would be a breach of the treaty of Rome for France to be prohibited from exporting to the United Kingdom. There are too many one-way streets in the European Community. It is a shame that this is not a two-way street and a two-way interconnector. That is my single reservation.

Compared with the situation in October, we have come a long way. I am not ashamed to say that I voted against my Government in October because I believed that it was right and proper for us to campaign as far as possible to save as much as we could of the coal mining industry. While we hoped that we might have been able to save more pits than the 12 plus one in development which we will save, at least we have 12, plus six mothballed. That is more than we had in October.

Let me simply say this to some sections of the coal mining industry: to save the markets for those pits, industry needs to have confidence in the product—coal. To have a strike on Friday will do nothing to generate confidence in the industry or to persuade people that coal is the product of the future. Coal is an important commodity, but that message will not be sent to industry if there is a strike of all the pits on Friday.

Mr. Cormack: Does my hon. Friend have confidence that the 12 pits will be open for at least two years?

Dr. Clark: I shall come to that in a moment—I would have done so anyway, so I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to get there. I am trying to be as brief as possible in order to allow other hon. Members to speak.

Let me refer to the 12 pits in a different sense. Twelve pits will be saved as a result of the White Paper. The Select Committee wanted to find a market for 16 million tonnes of coal. I am happy to join the Chairman of the Select

[Dr. Clark]

Committee in saying that I supported the recommendations of the Select Committee and that I was pleased that we had been able to propose a scheme which showed how an extra 16 million tonnes of coal could be sold.

Let us accept, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) did a few moments ago, that Select Committees try to be optimistic in such situations. We would be remiss if we were not optimistic. It is not for a Select Committee to study a situation and propose a pessimistic scenario which will then be beaten by the Government. It was up to us to set out the best possible case for saving the coal industry. Having chosen every optimistic case, we should not be too surprised that the Government's White Paper falls a little short of our wishes. It does not mean that we do not wish for more. We must present an optimistic case, and the Government must find out what can be done in practice. I shall give the House an example.

Mr. Cabom: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the reason for the 16 million tonnes and the transitional financial support was set against the background that we expected legislation? On three occasions, the President of the Board of Trade was asked whether he was prepared to legislate. That was coupled to the franchise market for the regional electricity companies. It would be no good subsidising coal without back-to-back arrangements with regional electricity companies, generators and the Coal Board. We said that the franchise should be extended to five years to bring that stability to the market. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees with that.

Dr. Clark: I do not disagree that that was the debate, and I do not disagree that that was our recommendation. Of course, the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to disagree with it: he is absolutely right. The Government must examine the ramifications of the recommendation. If they decide that electricity would be more expensive as a result of legislation, they might decide that they do not want to disadvantage British industry or, indeed, householders by giving them more expensive electricity.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Clark: I will not give way, because I am in the middle of comparing the Select Committee report with the White Paper. In table 25, we chose to examine the amount of coal required for electricity generation from a table supplied to us by Southern Electric, which was based on figures supplied by the national grid. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central referred to that a moment ago. We did so because the figures for power generation were good.

Equally, we could have chosen the figures in table 6, which were supplied by British Coal. If we had done that, we would have found that the amount of coal required for power generation in each of the next four years would have been 4 million tonnes less. If we had chosen that table, we would not have recommended 16 million tonnes of coal: we would have recommended 12 million tonnes, which is close to the figure which the Government decided on in their deliberations. I use that as an example to show that it is right and proper for Select Committees to be optimistic. However, it is not surprising if the Government take a more realistic stance.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend accept that our hope that we might be able to achieve that market depended crucially on matters such as the interconnector? Our central recommendation was that the Government should agree to subsidise coal to the tune of 16 million tonnes, if necessary. The Government accepted that in its entirety.

Dr. Clark: I accept that entirely.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is this a debate of the Select Committee? The Select Committee had three months to debate the matter. Since the President of the Board of Trade sat down, we have heard only from members of the Select Committee.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not for anyone except the hon. Member speaking to decide what he will say.

Dr. Clark: Perhaps you will agree, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the only hon. Members who sought to intervene on me were the Chairman of the Select Committee and one Select Committee member. Since I have given way to the two hon. Members who sought to intervene, I cannot be held responsible.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No, I will not give way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) referred to the fact that the Select Committee asked for a massive subsidy for coal. That has been agreed to in the White Paper. For some years, British Coal has been saying that, if it could receive support through to 1995, it would be able to mine coal and sell it at world market prices. In 1991, British Coal said that it could survive into the long term if it had three years of support until 1994. In 1992, it said that it could survive into the long term if it had three years of support until 1995, In 1993, it has been given two years of support, so it will survive until 1995. British Coal has got what it sought—it has massive support for two years.

I am disappointed, therefore, that, over the weekend, some jeremiahs in British Coal talked about the fact that some extra pits will close before Christmas. Such comments have not been made by the chairman of British Coal, but he has not repudiated them, either. I wonder why? [HON. MEMBERS: "It is true."] I have another theory. I think that some of the management in British Coal are seeking to contract the size of the British Coal industry so that, when it is privatised, it will be privatised as a small and profitable industry. Management will then seek a management buy-out. The managers of British Coal will be able to buy into an industry which has a future, and they will make capital gains.

I therefore say to my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade that, as I fear that some of the management of British Coal do not have their hearts in their job and are more interested in contracting than expanding the industry, a statement should be made that a management buy-out of British Coal will not be permitted. If and when British Coal is privatised, let it be privatised through flotation or a trade buy-out, but not through a management buy-out, because the managers of British Coal are far too interested in the future of a

management buy-out than in running the industry properly now. If we removed the opportunity for a management buy-out, the managers might be a little more interested in protecting their jobs now than in protecting their bank balances in the future.

My third and final point, Madam Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I had been looking with my right eye and not with my left. I say to hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, who are opposed to the White Paper that it is incumbent on the Government to do their best to protect jobs in all industries and all energy industries. I believe that the Government have gone about as far as they can to protect jobs in the coal industry without jeopardising jobs in other sectors of the energy world—whether the North sea, the nuclear industry or opencast coal mining.

Hon. Members—especially Conservative Members—who oppose the White Paper have an obligation to come forward with specific points and specific markets. They must say where those markets are and how they can be obtained, rather than simply saying that they do not agree with the White Paper. They must say why they do not agree with the White Paper.

The deal that we have now is the only deal on the table.

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I am in the middle of my concluding remarks, and I shall not give way.

The only deal that we have on the table is the deal to save 12 pits, put one pit into development and mothball six others. If we vote against the deal tonight, we shall put ourselves back to precisely where we were last October, with the closure of 31 pits. That is why I shall support the White Paper and vote for it tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, may I remind hon. Members that Madam Speaker announced a restriction on speeches of 10 minutes between the hours of 6 and 8 pm?

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) would not allow interventions from non-members of the Select Committee on the Opposition Benches. He said that he supported the White Paper, which includes the introduction of more licences for gas-operated stations. Opposition Members have been informed that the hon. Gentleman has been offered a consultancy by British Gas. The consultancy will not be announced until after the debate. The hon. Gentleman should tell the House whether that is the case and whether he has refused the consultancy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is up to any hon. Member to declare an interest, as appropriate. There are proper methods for recording interests.

Dr. Michael Clark: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is correct to say that I was approached last autumn and asked to be parliamentary adviser to British Gas. I declared that to the Chairman and members of the Select Committee. I also declared to them that I would not take on that position until the Select Committee report was completed. That is declared in the Register of Members' Interests. I offered to step down from the Select Committee if the members wished me to do so. They wished me to remain on the Select Committee. I feel that I have done nothing wrong.

Mr. McCartney: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There can be nothing further to that.

6.3 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am proud to represent a mining constituency in which it is believed that all the pits will close. Some 100,000 jobs and whole communities are at stake. I have been a Member of Parliament for 43 years and I held the post of Secretary of State for Energy for six of those years. The only reference that I shall make to the speech of the President of the Board of Trade is to say that I have never in my life heard from any Minister such a cynical speech backed up by such disreputable arguments which will convince no one outside the House.

The solution proposed in the White Paper is intended to motivate the Conservative party to back the privatisation of coal. That is where the money is to go. If the President of the Board of Trade had wanted to save the 31 pits, he could have done so without the Select Committee report. He could have checked coal imports. How can British miners compete with the slave wages of South African miners or with seven-year-olds in Colombia? Have they also to accept slave wages? Must we send children down the pits as they did in the 19th century?

Much was made of the interconnector. But the President of the Board of Trade declined to quote my answer in the House, which was that the purpose of the interconnector was to sell coal by wire to France. He signed the contract. My belief is that he signed the contract for imported nuclear energy from France as part of the build-up to the miners' strike which the Government were preparing. That was what it was all about. The Government provided the nuclear subsidy in 1989 because they wanted to subsidise the nuclear industry here and the treaty of Rome required them to extend the subsidy to French nuclear generators.

Of course, on environmental grounds one could justify cutting opencast mining. If local authorities were allowed to decide for themselves whether to allow opencast mining, most of it would not take place. As for gas, of course we stimulated its discovery. But we were also strict about its use. Britain puts fishermen out of work to conserve fish and similar conservation of gas so that it is not wasted in gas-fired power stations is a logical part of energy policy. The nuclear industry is subsidised up to the hilt. As has been said, if the Government moved some of the subsidy from the nuclear industry to coal, they could give away coal costing £50 a tonne to people who burn coal in their grate. The Government's argument is disreputable. It is all about privatisation.

In 1921 the Sankey commission under Lord Sankey recommended the public ownership or nationalisation of the mining industry. That recommendation was accepted by the coalition Government of which the Conservative party was a part. I have quoted the figures on safety in the privately owned mines in the 1930s, but I do so again because safety is highly relevant. Between 1927 and 1934, 7,839 miners were killed and 1,200,042 were injured, including 199,000 lads aged under 20.

[Mr. Tony Benn]

The record of the pits under private ownership was such that the demand for public ownership was taken up and argued correctly. It was Churchill, of course, who nationalised the coal royalties in 1942. But let us be clear that at the beginning of the last war in 1938 British pits under private ownership had increased output by only 13 per cent. since 1913, compared with 101 per cent. for the Dutch state-owned pits. So do not let us have any nonsense that privatisation is all about creating an efficient mining industry. The privately owned industry was unsafe, inefficient and dangerous. That is what the President of the Board of Trade is all about.

It is no part of my purpose to go over the record of the Government of which I was a member in self-justification. But, by God, I am proud of what we did. I am proud that we authorised the sinking of the Selby coalfield. I am proud of the Drax B coal-fired power station. I am proud that we brought the unions into every discussion about the future of the industry. I am proud that we reduced the age of retirement for underground miners from 65 to 60. I am proud that we hugely increased the money available for pneumoconiosis grants so that in a few years 64,000 successful claims were made.

I am proud of that record, and that is not self-justification—at my age, how can anyone care what is said about what they did 15 years ago? But if there is going to be a line-by-line argument, let us consider the figures. In 1979, when Labour left office, British Coal had a subsidy of 50p per tonne, German coal had £2·60 per tonne, French coal had £13 per tonne and Belgian coal had £15 per tonne. Even by narrow financial calculations which disregard human factors, that was a record to be proud of and I am proud that we defended 300 years of coal reserves, or 1,000 years if one includes the Barnsley seam which goes under the North sea and which will one day be brought ashore.

I am also proud of the fact that I offered a veto on pit closures to the National Union of Mineworkers. The union was prepared to close pits when they were dangerous, if working conditions were bad and when reserves were exhausted. The present pit closures are not about efficiency but about carrying on a long battle with the NUM. Thank God the union is taking action on Friday. If the Government can close pits for ever without any consultation, what is wrong with miners withdrawing their labour for one day to draw attention to the importance of the Government's actions?

Our oil, coal and gas reserves are of priceless value to this country and they must be publicly owned so that there can be planning. Industrialists in Chesterfield who supply equipment to the gas industry have told me that because of the private ownership of gas there are no long-term investment plans and everything has gone berserk. We want a planned, publicly owned energy policy, which brings unions and representatives of the work force in with the management and the community, to ensure that we do not throw away our most valuable asset. When Labour left office our country was self-sufficient in energy.

The first industrial revolution was built on coal and the future recovery of this country—which will not come under this Government—will come when we use coal, turn it into oil, use it as a chemical and develop it in every possible way. The policies pursued by the Government have destroyed our present and our prospects for future recovery.

6.12 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I listened to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) with considerable interest, but it is my responsibility to put the White Paper in perspective. Perhaps the right hon. Member will listen.

In western Europe, the Netherlands closed its coal mines several years ago, Belgium closed its mines in 1992, Germany's production was 72 million tonnes but will shortly be down to 38 million, France produces under 9 million tonnes, and Spain 19 million. Ruhrkohle, the principal producing company in Germany, is going to phase out 20,000 miners' jobs and reduce its production substantially. Germany is running down its production of deep-mined coal not because it wants to, but because other, more competitive fuels are available and, realistically, we should consider that when we study the situation in the United Kingdom.

Let us glance at the table for United Kingdom coal consumption on page 19 of the White Paper. In 1960, the electricity market took 26 per cent. of our coal, the domestic market took 28 per cent. and transport took 6 per cent. By 1992, electricity had increased its share from 26 per cent. to 79 per cent., and all other markets had decreased their share from a maximum of 28 per cent. to a maximum of 8 per cent. Steel industry coal consumption has dropped from 11 per cent. to 8 per cent. There is virtually no market for coal other than electricity, and we must recognise that.

I have here a little document from the Trades Union Congress on how we should find additional outlets for our coal. On page 10, it lists about 13 recommendations, which are all at the expense of other industries: we should curb French imports; reduce opencast mining; increase coal sales to the electricity market; extend sales to industrial and domestic markets; curb the dash for gas, and so forth.

There must come a time when an industry is past its former glories and must be reduced in size. I fully sympathise with many of the miners who will not be in there doing their allotted tasks tomorrow, but it is happening all over the world. The TUC's recommendations would simply transfer unemployment from one industry to another. Does that make sense? Does it make sense to transfer unemployment from coal mining to the gas or nuclear industries? Does that add up?

May I make a recommendation? In the pits which will be kept operating, the Government are giving the miners a chance. Sterling recently devalued and, as coal is priced in dollars, the world price is rising fast. It is therefore surprising that more coal cannot be exported to foreign markets. A recent issue of *Coal UK* states:

> "Sterling's continued decline against the US dollar has eliminated the advantage that imported coal holds over British Coal's output in all but the Thamesside power stations."

In other words, coal is becoming inernationally competitive. If, for the first time, British miners can become aggressive and secure markets, then we might be able to gain an advantage. I am not suggesting that that will be easy—it will be hard. For example, because

devaluation tends to be in their favour, production in the United States of America may fall in comparison with British production.

Obviously, it is no good producing coal that cannot be sold, and if it cannot be sold, it simply accumulates. When I visited Drax recently, I found a huge accumulation of coal stocks. Coal stocks now are as much as 45 million tonnes, which is twice the national requirement. I dare say that Opposition Members would recommend that coal stocks be even higher, but do they realise the cost of accumulating coal, and that, once exposed, the coal will begin to deteriorate? It does not make sense. The English public are beginning to recognise that an industry into which we have poured £17 billion of subsidies—we now intend to pour in more money—must limit its share of our national resources. Surely common sense must shortly prevail.

I mention another matter which will be of concern to the Government. They have their own proposals for VAT, but I do not feel very comfortable in saying that that is one way in which to deal with carbon dioxide emissions. We are now fixed in Europe and if a carbon tax should be extended to the United Kingdom, it will cause further anxiety, because it will make coal even less competitive, here and in all international markets. That would be a great pity, but it should be taken into account.

The public, who will be the jury in this particular case, will recognise that, of generating costs of new plant in the United Kingdom, Sizewell C will be the cheapest, followed by the gas plants—the CCGT—combined cycle gas turbine—plants, the AGRs and finally large coal-fired power stations. Coal will thus not be competitive with the other fuels.

The costs of existing plants show that Magnox stations are the most competitive. The nuclear AGR—advanced gas-cooled reactor—is extremely competitive, specially in comparison with large coal-fired power stations, particularly where they have FGD—flue gas desulphurisation—units.

The public recognise that they must pay such costs through their electricity bills. Do they want to pay higher prices in order to keep people continuously in the mines when we have been told it might be advisable to reduce the numbers to bring a balance to the economy? I simply say that we are not the jury; it is the public who are.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): What about a referendum?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am not suggesting a referendum. We are here to decide a certain matter, and we can decide it.

If the industry becomes uncompetitive, it must be adjusted to the right size to meet the right requirements. I hope that the Opposition will recognise that what I have suggested is common sense. Many have a vested interest—of course they have—but surely common sense must prevail in the national interest.

6.21 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): It is hardly a reasonable proposition for the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) to condemn the coal industry as he has when he does not recognise the enormous public assistance that the Government have given to the nuclear industry over the years. If we are to argue rationally in Parliament, let us at least start by arguing for equal treatment between the different sectors of the energy industry and not retain the distortions, as we have done for so long.

The question before us today is whether we endorse the White Paper. For the benefit of those few Conservative members of the Select Committee who may not be finally decided—and perhaps some other Tory Back Benchers—I argue that they should withhold their support from the White Paper. They should refuse to endorse the White Paper because it does not provide answers to the questions which the country asked Parliament to deal with when the people said no to British Coal in October last year when it started to break the law by closing pits without going through proper pit closure procedures. At that time the Library of the House produced a research note entitled, "British Coal Pit Closures: A leap in the dark." Five months of consideration by the Government followed. The White Paper was originally meant to be published in January, then February, and we have now seen it only at the end of March. There may have been a leap in the dark in October, but, sadly, there has been a long walk in the dark since then. The Government do not appear to be any less benighted now than they were in October.

My colleagues and I have put our cards on the table. We submitted evidence to the Government's consultation process—unlike the Labour party—and, unlike Labour, we have produced an alternative White Paper. We have set out our stall in the amendment on the Order Paper today.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been to the Table Office and to the Library to get a copy of the answer to the written question of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) about emphysema and bronchitis, but I have been unable to get one. I believe that that hon. Gentleman has shown the reply to one of my hon. Friends. All I can get is a press release from the Minister. I believe that Madam Speaker has made it quite clear that if a question is tabled it should be tabled on behalf of all of us. The press release was issued at 4.10 pm; it is now 6.25 pm but I still cannot get a copy of the written answer despite the fact that I have a vested interest in emphysema and bronchitis, which is important to my old miners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I recognise the importance of the subject, but I do not know the facts of the case at the moment.

Mr. Hughes: I hope that I am given injury time for that, given that I have only 10 minutes in all.

We have set out our stall, and the fundamental argument is that if we make decisions tonight, or any other night, about the future of the coal industry, they need to be made in the context of our energy industry as a whole. I would ask the House to say that we cannot do that tonight, because, as I suggested earlier to the President of the Board of Trade, we are being asked to make decisions about coal today when we will be asked to make decisions about the nuclear industry, renewables, opencast mining and orimulsion only later this year. It is a quite unreasonable proposition to argue now that we have to condemn, potentially, 18,000 people to lose their jobs when there could be, if we address this subject in a strategic context, an opportunity for a much more secure coal industry in the years ahead.

A second fundamental argument is that we really must not continue the presently proposed rundown of the coal

[Mr. Hughes]

industry when, at the same time, we have been bailing out its direct competitors in the energy market. The Government and the President of the Board of Trade talked about creating an opportunity for coal—about time too. In the past decade the coal industry has had no such opportunity. The Government took on the job of privatising the electricity industry and gave a protected position to the generators—not real competition at all. They took on the job of privatising the gas industry, and it is only now apparently that the Director General of Ofgas realises, and is prepared to say so, that in the gas industry there is not any real competition at all. We also know that there has been no competition for the nuclear industry because it has been artificially protected all this time and the subsidy will not be removed until 1998.

Dr. Hampson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I will not. I have got only 10 minutes. The hon. Gentleman was on the Select Committee and his Government have had plenty of time to deal with this issue, but without any White Paper about energy being previously produced from when they came to power in 1979 until they were bounced into producing one by the events of last autumn. It is no good complaining, if they are now asked to help the coal industry, that they cannot do that and be consistent with their market principles. They have been intervening in the market in all the other sectors. Coal is now asking for its fair share of assistance.

The House was asked whether it would endorse, and what view it took of, the 39 recommendations of the Select Committee. I pay tribute to my party's representative, my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), and to all the work of the Select Committee. The Select Committee report is a compromise document—the House knows that—but it is far better to accept the compromise that united hon. Members across the House as a prospect for the coal industry than the White Paper, which gives no security in terms of contracts above the 40 million tonnes negotiated and signed today, and gives no security in terms of supply when it proposes the reduction of stocks to only 10 million tonnes in the future. What security does that offer the country in the eventuality that stocks from abroad cost more, or that we cannot obtain them, or that we have several hard winters? We cannot base a decision today on these unknowables. The Government make no specific proposals—at least, nothing different from what was on offer in October—in terms of guarantees for the industry.

I was at the TUC rally in my constituency this afternoon and I know that the country is still behind the miners and the coal industry, and has not changed its view since October. What the country, the coalfield communities and the House want is a long-term energy strategy that guarantees security of supply and diversity of supply. We cannot have either of those things without securing a long-term future for the coal industry.

It is sometimes argued that a large sector coal industry is incompatible with environmental objectives. That is not true. It would be possible to produce 60 million tonnes a year for the next five years and at the same time adequately meet the best emission targets to which we are internationally committed. I ask colleagues who have not looked carefully at the issue to see how we and others have squared the circle—experts and party political figures alike—showing that it is possible to be both environmentally sound and sound in energy terms, as well as sane in employment and economic terms too.

We are not even debating 10 pits today. If we endorse the White Paper we are condemning them, even though the Boyds report said that two of them were viable and even though it is clearly arguable that Betws pit selling to the domestic market is also viable. We are asked only to debate the 21 pits; and of them the chairman of British Coal and others have now made it clear that the so-called saved 12 of them may also close because they are fighting for the same market as the others whose future is apparently secured. The Government are merely asking us to give them time to get over the next few months, until they can get their privatisation legislation into the House. That is not good enough, because the evidence of the past 13 or 14 years is that the privatisation process itself will, certainly in the short term, make life more difficult for the industry.

Leaving things to a rigged market while giving no thought to the strategic objectives means condemning the coal industry to an extremely difficult and lesser future. Eighteen thousand jobs are at risk in the House's decision tonight. If we condemn the coal industry tonight we will spend, according to the Select Committee, about £2 billion trying to rehabilitate skilled workers who do not want enterprise zones tomorrow, because they want work today. I ask the House to judge the evidence of the Select Committee, to prefer that evidence to the White Paper, to reject the White Paper and then to enter into a proper debate on a strategic energy future for Britain that guarantees a place for coal.

6.32 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I sometimes wonder whether I live on the same planet as some of those who have spoken this afternoon. I will not preface my remarks by saying how brief I intend to be—I will just be brief. And I do not apologise for being a member of the Select Committee either.

I concede that when I embarked on this investigation I knew little about the energy industry in general and coal mining in particular, and I came out at the other end of the investigation possibly none the wiser but infinitely better informed. I am enthusiastic about voting for the White Paper, however, because it errs on the side of realism.

We must be realistic about this industry. I remind the Opposition that it is not the only industry to have suffered from reductions in numbers and orders. I come from a shipbuilding town, as does the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). On Saturday I will have to attend a meeting in the town which, a few years ago, employed 25,000 people in the industry. That number has fallen to 1,200 today. So I do not want to hear any lessons from Opposition Members about communities that face these problems.

The north-east has suffered in this way. The Government certainly have a responsibility in the affected areas—a responsibility to help the north-east and south Wales. One has only to look at the south Wales coalfield to see what should and what will be done.

We have heard today that 18,000 jobs are in jeopardy—as if the people concerned were suddenly going to be

throwa on the scrap heap. That is just not true; it is a static view of what has happened in this country in the past 25 or more years.

I do not understand why other members of the Select Committee are concerned about the White Paper's strategy. The central thrust of that strategy is that there should be a tapered subsidy to allow British Coal to do what it has said it wants to and can do—that is, to reduce the price of deep-mined coal, over time, to world prices. The Government have accepted that central strategy, and it will be put into action.

One of the reasons why I did not sign the Select Committee report was that one of my hon. Friends said that it was the duty of a Select Committee to be optimistic. I beg to differ. It is the duty of a Select Committee to be as realistic as possible. Hon. Members may be interested to hear how we arrived at the figure of 19 million more tonnes which we decided could be found by British Coal. The answer is: a bit of good, old-fashioned, political horse trading. At 10.30 pm Tory Members were sitting there saying one figure was realistic as an extra tonnage, and Labour Members were saying that they wanted more. We sat gazing at each other, and for the sake of a unanimous report—or at least, one against which no one would vote —we picked a figure in the middle, and then added, for good measure, 3 million non-electricity supply industry tonnes. There was not a slide rule in sight, nor a reference to the available evidence.

We shall see. I happen to believe, on the evidence available to the Committee, that the more likely figure for extra tonnage is in the region of 12 million tonnes—but I was willing to go a bit higher for the sake of unanimity. I could be wrong; I hope that I am. The Government, however, are giving the industry and the work force the chance to find out whether the figures are feasible.

Everyone is talking as though the 12 pits being saved will disappear within the next few months. That is possible, certainly, but if British Coal is genuine when it says—I have no evidence to the contrary—that it can bring prices down to world levels in three or four years' time, well and good. But there can be no guarantee. How could we expect the President of the Board of Trade to give a guarantee? I would not believe it even if it were given.

Even at the levels proposed in October, this industry would be the fourth biggest coal industry in the world. Let us see it in proportion, therefore. Let us give British Coal the chance to see whether it can do what it says it can do, and then we can settle down to a more stable and prosperous future for the industry. Without this White Paper, 5,000 people on Deeside, in the Wirral, on Merseyside and in north Wales would not have the opportunity to work at Connah's Quay. And at least another 3,000 permanent jobs would not have been available to people in that part of the world without this White Paper. That is the compassionate way forward.

6.39 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): We would not be here today debating these problems if the Government had not privatised the electricity supply and generating industry in the way that they did. I thought, when the privatisation proposals were first made, that there would be a third competitive force against the duopoly of National Power and PowerGen, using coal as a production fuel. Instead, the third force inserted by Lord Wakeham was not a body able to build small, coal-fired power stations at the coal fields but one using natural gas.

I shall deal now with one of the pits in the list of 10 that will not be saved—Betws, which produces anthracite. The Boyds report said that Betws was not economically viable using the long wall method of mining. That poses an interesting question. When considering whether pits can be economically viable, one must take all sorts of factors into account. Betws is not economically viable given that, for 15 years, British Coal has mined one of the main veins —the red vein—by means of the long wall method. There is little coal left there now, but the purpose of the original investment was to amortise, over about 15 years, the cost of the equipment necessary for long wall mining. Now, the coal left in the seam, and underneath it as a result of some developments, cannot be mined economically using the long wall method. There would be no point in doing so.

Boyds—I make no criticism on that ground—was not asked to look at anything else such as the future, or different methods of mining. Even so, it concluded that Betws could be profitable. I went to see the Minister of State, Welsh Office and I thank him for the reference to Betws in the White Paper. It says that it has reserves which could be exploited and that profits could be made from developing Betws. I know that that is the case.

A second point of interest, to me and those from the anthracite coalfield area, is the debate, which has been going on for years, about the best way to mine anthracite. There are those who say that the long wall method with the huge equipment that is used by British Coal—it has done a good job and produced a lot of coal in the anthracite coalfield—is the best method. However, as Boyds makes clear, the equipment used in that process costs a great deal, whereas the coal produced, because of the way it is mined, contains at least 30 to 40 per cent. duff—the lowest-priced product on the market. Therefore, British Coal has invested huge sums in the production of anthracite, but the product has been the lowest priced on the market. Many would argue that that is not the sensible way to go about things. Instead, we should reduce the cost of production and produce the higher-priced product—the larger lumps of coal.

Whatever happens when we vote after the debate, whether or not the Government win, the anthracite coal of west Wales will be mined only by private owners. Even if it were to be done by Britsih Coal—it will not be—it would be a privatised British Coal. Instead, other private companies such as Ryans will try to mine the anthracite.

I have three further points to make. First, it is no good Tory Members, especially the right hon. Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow), saying that we are being reactionary and antediluvian when we talk about safety. The Government should recognise the history of all this —the tradition, the problems, the awful communal and family history of the failure by private owners to provide proper safety standards in the coal mines. The Government must set people's minds at rest and ensure that, when the industry is privatised, the high safety standards and working conditions which, whatever criticisms we have of British Coal, we must acknowledge it maintained, are continued. That is in everybody's interest, including those who may want to invest in the anthracite coalfield, because without that, people will not work for them and we shall not get the economic benefit of developing our resources.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

My second point may be small, but it is still important. Apart from a few that are surreptitiously in private hands, all the plans and geological surveys lie somewhere in the vaults of British Coal. I do not know where they are—perhaps Nottingham or Derby—and why they should be there I do not know. The plans, which go back to pre-nationalisation days, should be returned to the state, to the Welsh Office, the Department of Trade and Industry or the Welsh Development Agency, so that any potential investor can obtain them and have all the available information when deciding whether to invest. There is no reason why British Coal should keep the plans. It has left the anthracite coalfield and has no more to give it.

Thirdly, as the future of the anthracite coalfield is, I am sorry to say, going to lie with small, private firms, we should set up a marketing co-operative along the lines of the successful French farmers' co-operatives. We cannot look for a large investor in the anthracite coalfields, so we shall have small producers, who will need back-up and help. This may sound ridiculous, but, just as Welsh lamb has been, Welsh anthracite should be marketed as a prime product. It has not been one because much of it has been sold to power stations as duff. I do not know how that will be achieved—perhaps through Government help, although we may not need it—but a co-operative should be set up to enable the producers to produce a quality product and ensure all the safety standards and conditions that go with it.

I am not romantic about the anthracite coalfield of west Wales, but it can make a contribution to an area which finds it difficult to attract investment because it is on the periphery of both the M4 and Europe. Furthermore, it is an indigenous fuel. A partnership between the smaller producers and the Government will be the best way forward for my community and my constituency.

6.47 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I have some sympathy with the amendment, partly because of the long history of pit closures in my constituency and partly because of the pretty appalling way in which the original announcement was made. Giving people a few days to redundancy is no way to treat them, especially bearing in mind the massive productivity gains in the coal industry in recent years.

I also have some sympathy with the argument that nuclear power is unfairly subsidised—a point to which I shall return—and with the opposition to the French link. That is especially so given that a report in 1990 by the general administrator of the Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique criticised Electricité de France for building too much generating capacity and pointed out that exports are being priced at a loss.

The mining industry has, rightly, a unique place in society. There is great respect for the skill that miners show in winning coal, often in difficult conditions, and for the huge productivity gains of recent years. The industry has a heroic quality that is rightly admired by many people. But that admiration should not be debased into sentimentality.

Britain generates more electricity from coal—70 per cent.—than all our other major competitors. France generates only 8 per cent. from coal, Germany only 53 per cent. and even the United States—the land of cheap coal—generates only 55 per cent. We pay more for our coal than almost any other nation in the world. The cost per tonne is £43 in Britain whereas the import price is £33 and the OECD average is £26. The French pay £26 per tonne and the Italians £33. Prices in Australia and the United States are as low as £15 and £18 respectively.

Much has been said about British Coal being the lowest-cost——

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I shall not give way. Time is too short. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

It has been said that British Coal is the lowest-cost producer in Europe and much comparison has been made with Germany. If the Germans follow a mistaken policy, why should we follow suit? The costs to Germany are huge. The usually quoted cost of £1 billion must be more than quadrupled to £4·5 billion when the coal penny is taken into account. That is the subsidy that is paid to the industry by users of large amounts of coal.

Nor is there a cosy consensus in Germany. Indeed, there is a great deal of controversy. This was evidenced by the bankruptcy of a major steel company—Klockner—late in 1992, which was the result of high coal prices. Recently, the Germans announced 20,000 mining redundancies and over the next decade the bulk of the coal industry in what was West Germany will close.

The French, the Belgians, the Dutch and the Italians have already largely closed their coal industries. They have recognised what many in the United Kingdom have not: that in many instances the thickest and easiest seams were worked out in Europe long ago. Geology is too often against us despite our skills in winning coal in difficult conditions. In the United States and Australia, there is access to huge amounts of easy-to-get opencast coal in areas that are not especially environmentally sensitive. When it comes to deep mining, their seams are often a great deal thicker than those in Europe.

Why turn what has been an asset to the United Kingdom in the past into a millstone round the rest of industry when cheaper coal is available in world markets? It would be sheer protectionism not to buy cheaper coal. To put it simply, the Government would be putting the interests of one group of workers above those of others by taking that course.

There have been many calls this evening for an energy strategy to be directed by Government. For most of the period following the war we had a state-directed energy strategy. It had two planks, the first of which was nuclear power. In 1965, advanced gas-cooled reactor technology was ordered because the Government wanted it, despite the fact that pressurised water reactors were less complex, proven and cheaper. That was part of a national energy and industrial strategy to build up an advanced British nuclear power generating capacity.

By the early 1970s, all the five AGR stations were in deep trouble. In 1974, the Central Electricity Generating Board chairman, Arthur Hawkins, called it

"a catastrophe which we cannot repeat".

He urged that we should go with American-designed PWRs. The same year, however, because of Government intervention, we went ahead with another British design,

the steam-generating heavy water reactor. Three years later the project was abandoned on cost and safety grounds and two more AGRs were ordered.

The result of Government intervention and the state-directed energy policy was that after 40 years of massive waste of resources and money we had some of the most expensive nuclear generating capacity in the western world. The cost of it was not even known until the electricity generating industry was privatised.

The other plank of the energy strategy was coal. That was characterised in the decades after the war by cosy guaranteed contracts between the generators and the National Coal Board. No imports of coal were allowed. Similarly, no gas-fired generation was allowed. That puts into perspective the claims that are made now by members of the coal lobby that the market is rigged against coal. The result of the policy was that industrial consumers paid far too much for electricity. That was illustrated by the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1981 on the CEGB. There was a massive and additional ongoing subsidy from the taxpayer to the industry. The system did not help miners, who found themselves working in a high-cost, low-productivity industry. They were relatively low paid until recently.

Even so, the industry still lost jobs. In Amber Valley, 10,000 mining jobs were lost in the 1960s and 1970s under Labour Governments. The redundancy payments amounted to no more than a pittance. Meanwhile, every job that was preserved in the mines was at the cost of jobs elsewhere in industry. We were left over-dependent on expensive coal while other countries benefited from diversity and cheap imports. So much for a state-directed energy strategy.

A much-used argument is the one that turns on the need for energy security. We are told that imports are unreliable. It should be rememberd that the bulk of our coal imports come from the United States and Australia, which are hardly unreliable countries. So-called cheap foreign coal from Russia, Poland and the third world is often sneered at by Opposition Members because they say that those countries are unstable. Clearly, those countries will become more unstable if richer countries, such as the United Kingdom, do not allow them to export what they can best produce. No one suggests that we should rely on Russian coal, but it is extraordinary for those who call themselves socialists to refuse to buy coal from poorer countries. That attitude does not sound much like the brotherhood of man to me.

In any event, to refuse to import energy and to deplete domestic supplies, as is proposed by Opposition Members, would lead to less security, not more. If we cut ourselves off from the huge international energy market, which is competitive and diverse, we shall ultimately penalise our industry and our consumers.

Those who have argued that some pits must close and that customers must decide which sources of energy they wish to buy have often been told, "You are hard-hearted and you don't care." Surely there is nothing soft-hearted in taking easy, short-term options which mean keeping one group in jobs at the expense of others elsewhere. That is an example of short-termism which state-directed energy policies were supposed to avoid. There is nothing soft-hearted in the attitude of a party that led to the closure of a pit every week in the 1960s and 1970s. The same party was responsible for the worst mistakes in nuclear policy during the same period. It has argued against the imposition of value added tax on fuel, but has happily sanctioned higher fuel prices for the less well-off if that is the price to pay for protecting the coal industry.

The Labour party's spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), had the cheek to say on television yesterday that British Coal was a success story. Yet his party opposed the pit closures in the 1980s, which at least pulled British Coal back from the brink. That is not caring, nor is it big-hearted. Rather, it is the worst type of fraudulent opportunism and should be recognised for what it is.

6.56 pm

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): The debate is reflecting already views and attitudes that perhaps are to be expected. Some of the members of the Select Committee on Energy, who took up primary time, seem to be divided. They seem to wish to move away from the report to which they agreed.

It was to be expected that Conservative Members would seek to use the phoney formula that the President of the Board of Trade has presented to bring about the death knell or demise of the mining industry as we know it. We on the Opposition Benches seek to protect and preserve what we consider to be a priceless national asset—coal. It will give us hundreds of years of energy security if used wisely, and inexpensively, to produce the type of energy that we need to make available for industry and business generally.

Dr. Hampson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cunliffe: No way.

Dr. Hampson: The hon. Gentleman should read the Select Committee's report.

Mr. Cunliffe: I do not want to read the report. I am the self-assigned chairman of the organisation that seeks the abolition of all Select Committees. They are a waste of time and money. I have no problems or scruples about that.

Opposition Members, along with the mining unions, the industry generally and industrialists, have always argued for a fair and honest playing field, which would enable proper plans to be made for a fuel policy that would bring rewards for all industries.

The Government have never had an energy policy. On Thursday, the Secretary of State went back 20 years in talking about plans for coal, but I remember what was happening in those days, when I was a young mining apprentice and fitter. I remember the great Schumacher reports, and the days of large subsidies for the coal and steel industries. I remember the days of Mr. Spaak, and others of that character. In those days, there was at least a recognition that the British mining industry had a part to play: it had come up with the goods during the second world war, and—inevitably, at a total loss—had supplied the British steel industry to the tune of £2 a ton. That is an instance of the miners' patriotism; we need no lessons about their contribution from Conservative Members.

Why do the Government hate intervention? The Secretary of State wears many different hats nowadays: we never know what his view is. At one point, he was the arch-protector of market forces; now he is masquerading as the patron saint of intervention. I have met the right hon. Gentleman on five occasions, three times with the

[Mr. Cunliffe]

miners' parliamentary group and twice with the all-party "10 pits" group. On all those occasions, he said, "I am not doing this; it is British Coal. I cannot intervene: my hands are tied." He says that he has pleaded on bended knees with all the regulators and power generating boards, and that he has done his very best, but no one believes him.

The House does not believe what the right hon. Gentleman has said today about this phoney formula. Some members of the Conservative coal group do not believe him; obviously, the mining unions do not believe him. Has he any credibility left? The formula is not just a quick fix; indeed, it is not a fix at all. It will not fix the right hon. Gentleman's Conservative colleagues who will not vote for the White Paper. All that it will fix is the demise of the British mining industry. As the arch-privatiser, the right hon. Gentleman intends to use the bits and pieces that are left of the industry to maximise not productivity, but profits. That is what privatisation is about.

Time and again, I have pointed out to the right hon. Gentleman that £1,270 million a year goes into the nuclear levy to protect the aging Magnox stations. They are 30 years old, and potentially unsafe; nevertheless, they are eating into subsidies that were never meant to be used for such a purpose. As is clear from the international coal report, the right hon. Gentleman is responsible for ensuring that the fossil fuel levy is spent wisely, prudently and fairly, according to the rules. The report

"blows apart one of the great misconceptions about this levy on fossil fuel which is that it is used to fund the decommissioning of nuclear stations".

Only the Secretary of State believes that misconception. The report makes it clear that, of the £2·46 billion invested in 1990-91, only £20 million was spent on decommissioning.

Where has the rest of the money gone? It has gone to privatised nuclear electric companies, which have used it as liquidity. It has been invested in the building of the Sizewell B power station; it has been used in all the ways in which it was never intended to be used. That returns us to the question of fairness and accountability: state money is being poured into an industry that is being deliberately propped up.

The cash flow will cease. I hope that the next report does not take five months to produce. Everyone will want to know why the miners voted to strike, but the answer is simple: they were told that the report would be forthcoming in a short time. First, we were told that the Secretary of State would issue it in January; then it was February; then it was March. Their impatience is understandable, and it has been manifested democratically in a ballot.

Let us examine another aspect. Who has ever established the true cost of opencast mining? What about the ravages suffered by the environment? Some years ago, when he was coal Minister, the present Secretary of State for Wales answered an Adjournment debate in which I spoke. As he will recall, the largest opencast mining planning application in western Europe amounted to 4 million tonnes, 15 years' development and five years' reclamation; 15,000 properties were affected by noise, dust, intrusion, transport costs and other environmental problems. It is a disgrace that an area should be blighted for nearly 20 years.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) will deal with the Parkside issue. I am not hinting, as I know that the list of speakers will already have been compiled, but I think that it is an important issue.

I believe that this phoney formula is simply an excuse to get the Secretary of State off the hook that he has deliberately created. It is an attempt to pretend that opportunities can be opened up, presenting British Coal with a future. That is not what British Coal believes; this weekend, it made it clear that it considered this a short-term fix. The Secretary of State is in a crisis. Politicians can see through his position, as they have done before. The right hon. Gentleman is blowing the bugles of advance to cover his retreat. He has failed the nation and the mining fraternity by his inability to use the necessary hindsight and insight, and to restore the dignity of the British miners, their families and their industry.

7.6 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): During the debate on the closure of coal mines, it has become obvious to me that, somewhere along the line, a decision was made that would completely redirect Britain's energy policy. We have heard a lot about the past, but I am not sure that we have put a date on that decision. It may have stemmed from the disastrous and crazy coal strike of 1984-85, but the privatisation of electricity that took place in 1990 has now redirected Britain's energy policy away from coal.

The White Paper published last week—and, I suggest, my right hon. Friend's insensitive announcement that he had that day given the go-ahead for three more gas-fired power stations—confirms that redirection. Britain's energy supply has been totally distorted by the way in which we privatised the electricity industry and by the incompetence of the industry regulator. By allowing two main power generators to control the market, we left the door open for regional electricity companies to look for alternatives—hence the so-called dash for gas.

The regulator has failed Britain. He should have demanded a break-up of the power generation duopoly and its control of the market; he should also have recognised that, although nuclear electricity may have the lowest marginal cost, it has the highest true cost. Unforgiveably, the regulator and the Government have failed to notice that we do not just have a dash for gas on our hands. I believe that the gas has already escaped and almost blown away coal altogether.

Unless we take immediate, positive action, we will not need the coal industry at all after 2005. That was confirmed by the list of gas-fired power station capacity given in last week's White Paper, to which we have now added three more stations. Perhaps I could digress for a few moments and ask who in his right mind would allow the development of a power station in the beautiful Vale of Pickering when we could continue coaling in areas such as south Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, where industry and coal mining have always lived side by side. They have existed together for a long time in those areas.

I am one of those hon. Members who, as a small child many years ago—I shall not say how many—saw coal coming along the canal in barges to the mills. That was the foundation of our industrial heritage. Without that supply of coal, we should not have had our industrial revolution.

The premise of the White Paper is that we have lost the battle for coal and that we should organise an orderly

retreat and a dignified and respectable burial, albeit with massive subsidies on offer. I congratulate my right hon. Friend and the Minister for Energy on having made some progress in the last few months. Some of my colleagues think it outrageous that these massive subsidies should be on offer, as they have not been offered to other industries. I suspect, however, that many of those subsidies will never be used. Many parts of the coal industry do not need a subsidy. Very cheap coal is being produced. All that the coal industry needs is a fair crack at an equal opportunities market. We hear a great deal nowadays about equal opportunities, although they are not usually directed towards the coal industry.

What we have heard today of who did what, and when, in the past does not matter to me, if we are serious about the future. That is what we are here to talk about. The only way to organise an orderly retreat, if British Coal cannot and does not want to run some of these pits, it to privatise them quickly and efficiently, but—and this is a big "but" —with a very careful eye on health and safety. That is most important.

The industry will have to be split up into competing companies. I do not want British Coal under just another name; that would not do. Privatisation would get rid of regional offices, Hobart house, excessive administration costs and, I hope, the chairman as well. As the Ernst and Young report said, that would immediately wipe over £50 million off the cost of the coal industry, which in itself would considerably reduce the cost of coal.

The miners have already shown that they could improve their productivity. They can improve it still further. As has happened in many of our other industries, many of the miners listened to what was said and fulfilled their commitments. Productivity can be further increased by changes in working practices and technology. Pithead coal can be cheap and, as I have already said, in some cases it is already cheap. The decentralisation of marketing and administration will ensure that even cheaper coal is delivered to the user.

We should ensure that any pits that are closed can be licensed for private operation. It will create true competition and, I hope, will help to fill the niche markets for coal. That might prevent a crazy situation. The closure of Grimethorpe colliery might lead to the Monckton Coke and Chemical Company in Royston, some five miles from Grimethorpe, having to import its coal from Poland. British Coal says that it cannot supply coal, other than from Grimethorpe, so would this company please import coal from Poland. That is outrageous. By the time the Polish coal arrives, it will not be very much cheaper than something from down the road.

Any industrial reorganisation takes time and costs money. Time must be provided for that to happen before closures take place. The White Paper provides money, in the form of a subsidy, but I have already said that I do not believe that much of that money will be used for this purpose. There must be some changes in working practices. Many of our textile mills and engineering industries have experienced changes. They have had to change in order to compete in the world market. I do not suggest for one moment that we should not expect the coal industry to do the same.

We are always complaining about the fact that a level playing field does not exist in Europe for our manufactured goods, but in this country we have a very uneven playing field. I am sure that we should like to do something about that. The Caminus report suggested that more coal will be used in 1997 and 1998. That is marvellous. We welcome it. If, however, we are talking about some pits closing by the end of this year, there will be a gap before there is a demand for that coal. British coal will not then be available and we shall probably have to import even more coal.

The dash for gas has not slowed down; it has accelerated. Steps should be taken to prevent the future development of excess gas-fired capacity. I would never suggest that we should save jobs in one British industry at the expense of another. I have suggested all along that we should help to preserve British jobs and our own energy requirements. I am not too concerned about jobs in Europe. I am quite sure that Europe is not concerned about jobs in my part of Yorkshire.

As for the French interconnector, it should be two-way. It is absolutely nonsensical to have this one-way track. I welcome the fact that moves are to be made to try to make it two-way. As the new French Government may be protectionist, we shall have to insist upon it being two-way. Alternatively, perhaps we should hold up the Maastricht treaty until we get some sense out of the French. If we cannot obtain agreement on basic issues, I am not so sure that there will be agreement on more important issues.

I realise that I cannot possibly say all that I wanted to say in the time allowed to me. When I came to this House, almost 10 years ago, I was a committed Conservative. I remain a committed Conservative. However, I have always had an overriding problem. I see my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench nodding and saying, yes, they know that. I am an independent-minded Yorkshire woman. My constituents expect me to be an independent-minded Yorkshire woman; they would be very disappointed if I were not. That inevitably guides my star and my decision-making. Consequently, I cannot support the motion on the Order Paper.

I am willing to be converted on the road to Damascus, even up to the last minute when the Minister winds up, but the small print—I spent most of yesterday going through it—does not lead me to believe that it addresses the problem of equality in the market. I accept that some conditions may not be easy to change, but when we had our debate last October I hoped that we could look forward to some help. I welcome what has been done, but I am not sure that there is enough political will to move far enough along the way.

We need a future market for coal. All our other industries—textiles, engineering and so on—have had to change and the coal industry is no exception. To go on strike does not help the industry. To do so would push to one side all our arguments about the industry being reliable in the future. Strike action, therefore, would not help to secure the industry's future.

7.16 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The President of the Board of Trade ranted on for an hour. Apart from giving us a lesson in what the Labour Government did or did not do 20 or 25 years ago, he told us nothing. Back Benchers have only 10 minutes in which to put their case. I am very proud of the fact that I have this opportunity to speak on behalf of miners and their families at Parkside

[Mr. John Evans]

colliery in my constituency—one of the 10 pits which has been on the hit list since October of last year. Sadly, it appears that it has now been joined by two others.

If Parkside colliery closes, 850 miners will lose their jobs. At least twice that number of jobs will be lost in related industry and commerce in the St. Helens area. It is a grievous blow to Newton-le-Willows and St. Helens because male unemployment in my constituency is of the order of 17 per cent.

That figure masks two even more important figures. The first is long-term male unemployment. I remind the House that miners will join a group of men who have been unemployed for a very long time—men who were employed in the glass industry and who lost their jobs seven or eight years ago after the modernisation of the industry. Long-term male unemployment in St. Helens stands at 37 per cent.

Another equally important figure concerns unemployment among males under the age of 25, which is more than 34 per cent. One of the few industries in which young people in my area had any opportunity of finding a job was the mining industry. Sadly, another door is about to be closed in their face. I met the union representatives at Parkside colliery yesterday. The trade union committee expressed its outrage at the short time which has elapsed between the introduction of the White Paper and this debate. Its members feel that it is a disgrace that they had no opportunity to see the White Paper, read it and, much more important, consult their members about its contents.

The Secretary of State talks about consultation. Surely the trade union officers should have had the opportunity to consult their members. They believe that the White Paper and its presentation by the President of the Board of Trade is simply a cynical attempt to confuse the British people who are still angered by the original proposition to close 31 collieries and throw 32,000 miners out of work. They maintained to me that they saw it as a cynical bribe on the part of the Secretary of State to buy off his Back Benchers.

Like other hon. Members, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), because it appears that she at least has the bottle to carry through her original intention. I wonder how many of her hon. Friends will join her in the Opposition Lobby tonight.

While I am on the subject of consultation, I will remind the House of what the Secretary of State said to me last week when I asked him about consultation, about the 10 pits and why he had not mentioned them:

> "He will also be aware that the reason why I did not mention the 10 collieries in my statement is that they are subject to the procedures of consultation and it would be wholly inappropriate for me to refer to them".

Let me make it clear to the President of the Board of Trade that, while there have been three or four meetings with various union representatives at national and regional level, the meetings have taken the form of British Coal telling them why it intended to close the pits. There has been no meaningful consultation whatever about any aspect of the closure or the viability of Parkside colliery. As an example of the attitude of the employers towards consultation, notice of one meeting was not even sent to the union representatives; it was posted up in the pit lamp room. The subject of that meeting was the filling of the colliery's shafts—a subject which was hardly likely to breed confidence in the miners that they would have meaningful consultations.

In the same answer, the President of the Board of Trade said,

> "The hon. Member will be aware that 30 per cent. of the miners from Parkside have already accepted since last October the redundancy terms that we have made available to them."—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 1245.]

It was as if he was suggesting that the miners were deserting their colliery. When one considers the psychological pressure that the miners have been subject to since October last year when the colliery was taken out of production, when one recalls the fact that the vast majority of these men have lost at least 50 per cent. of their wages during that time, and when one appreciates that only a few months ago the nearby Parsonage colliery had its shafts filled and sealed within 72 hours, it is hardly surprising that some miners have left the colliery. Indeed, the only surprising thing is that 70 per cent. of the miners have actually stayed on the books of British Coal.

I want to reiterate the statement that I made in the debate on 21 October last year. Parkside colliery, which is the last colliery in Lancashire and which was sunk in 1964, is a profitable colliery. It is an outrage that British Coal should seek to close it because of a loss in the first six months of the financial year 1992-93, when the colliery made substantial profits in the preceding five years. The colliery lost money last year because it had embarked on development work and the opening of a new seam which has never gone into full production; yet the miners themselves have said that if that seam was put into full production it would make Parkside colliery a highly profitable enterprise.

The point to bear in mind about Parkside is that its market was, and would still be, assured. Fiddlers Ferry power station, only six miles from the colliery, took 700,000 tonnes, 80 per cent., of Parkside's annual production of high quality, low sulphur and low ash content coal, by a direct rail link. The remaining 20 per cent. went to other domestic market customers. There is no stockpile of coal at Parkside. The colliery also has more than 24 million tonnes of classified and unclassified reserves which will be lost if the pit closes.

Fiddlers Ferry still requires coal. Where is it to come from? PowerGen plans to expand the South Gladstone terminal at Liverpool. Obviously it is not proposing to export coal. It will import even more coal through that terminal, and much of the imported coal will replace what should have come from Parkside. The docks are more than 30 miles further from the power station than Parkside is, so there will be increased road transport costs as well. There will be exchange rate fluctuations. There will be the capital cost of the dock expansion scheme, and the local authority is rightly imposing planning demands to reduce pollution.

That is why the miners of this country say that there is no such thing as a level playing field, because no one has taken into account costs such as I have described. The miners of Parkside ask for that level playing field and a chance to compete fairly which they have never been given. The Government say that it is a question of market forces and that they cannot regulate or interfere with those mythical market forces, but the miners of Parkside pointed out to me the double standards that operate. Last week they learned from *The Guardian*, via a question asked by

Lord Spens in another place, that in 1991 the Bank of England had established a lifeboat fund to bale out banks and financial institutions faced with collapse in the wake of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International scandal. It is suggested that the operation cost over £1 billion. There was no problem about subsidies or taxpayers' money being spent in this way, and Parliament was not even informed of the situation.

If the miners of Parkside, like the rest of the miners of this country, are given an equal chance to compete fairly, there will be a great chance for the coal industry. That is what the miners have been denied. It is time the House gave them that opportunity.

7.26 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The White Paper is undoubtedly the most fundamental and authoritative study of the British coal scene by Government for many years. I begin by paying tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends the President and the Minister of State for their hard work and commitment. They have been available to colleagues at all times to explain and argue the contents of their White Paper and I very much appreciate that opportunity. I also pay tribute to the chairman and members of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry for their work. Their study is also a fundamental one and, because it is backed by expertise on which Select Committees can call—expertise at the highest level—it is equally authoritative.

The real question for the House today is how far the Government have taken or should have taken on board the conclusions and recommendations of the Select Committee. Certainly, we have moved a long way from last October when it was announced that there was no alternative to shutting down half of what was then our coal production. If the House had agreed to that, our largest indigenous energy resource would have been all but destroyed, with horrendous results for the national economy, for the balance of payments, for unemployment in mining communities in a time of deep recession, and for a fine and proud industry.

We now have the review and the Select Committee study and both documents confirm that the electricity market is rigged against coal, with privileged access to it granted to other sources of supply.

At last we have a White Paper that recognises that the private sector has a major part to play in the development of the coal industry. That should have been recognised before and coal privatisation should have taken place before electricity privatisation. I do not believe that a private sector coal industry would have got us into the position we were in last October or would have handled the closure programme or the mothballing announcements in the way that we have heard about today. There is an enormous amount of expertise in the private sector which is efficient and not top heavy with administrators as nationalised industries are bound to be. The private sector is keen to get on and develop markets.

The belated decision to allow the private sector to take on closing or mothballed pits may be too late to save those pits, including Bevercotes colliery in my constituency. To imagine that seams will continue to be worked and that new seams will be developed as necessary with roughly the same work force in the several months that it will take to get the private sector running those mines is not realistic. Current legislation would prevent that through restrictions on the numbers who may be employed. Perhaps relevant legislation is in progress, or perhaps my right hon. Friend plans some, but I must tell the House, if it does not already know, that the shenanigans of the Maastricht rebels make it highly unlikely that we shall have any new legislation in time to save some of the pits.

Some of the privatisation prospects seem a little more apparent than real to members of mining communities. Today I saw the chairman of British Coal's statement about privatisation. He said that British coal is committed to offering collieries that it does not intend to keep in production to suitable private sector operators, but he added that that must not be allowed to result in better long-life collieries being put at risk and must not jeopardise the viability of the core business. He may have a point, but that is not allowing the private sector to compete in the coal industry.

Even if pits are to be sold to the private sector, what guarantee is there that British Coal, which will be the vendor—the Government will not be selling the pits—will sell the pits at a fair and reasonable price and will be selling them in such a state that work can be carried on from day one without huge further investment? There is enormous scope for British Coal to stifle the private industry. I seek an assurance about the operation of the private sector and the restrictions that may be imposed on it.

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): May I help my hon. Friend?

Mr. Alexander: I am sorry. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way, but I am subject to a very strict time limit. I hope that he can speak to me later or, if I conclude my remarks early, perhaps he can intervene.

Much has been said about the French connection and I support what has been said. I am no longer a practising lawyer and was never an international lawyer, but I cannot believe that, because the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) arranged a deal in 1978, we are stuck with it for ever. If it had been a deal to sell this country baked beans, could it seriously be argued that we had to take French baked beans for ever, despite the consequences for our own baked bean industry and its employees? I do not believe that article 30 of the treaty of Rome would apply had this involved anything other than coal. Therefore, the passage on the French connection is deeply disappointing. Six pits would have been saved. I urge my right hon. Friend to get the issue unscrambled, even at this late hour.

Last Thursday, my right hon. Friend said that, in any event, a restriction on imports of electricity would put the Government in breach of the indemnity given to the National Grid Company at the time of electricity privatisation. I know that he was not the Minister responsible for energy at the time and that many nasties have slipped by the House under the guise of legislation doing something else, but the undertaking should never have been given. If it had to be given, it should have been made absolutely clear to the House that it was being given and what the effect would be.

With hindsight, it is the lack of competition due to the privatisation of the electricity industry which has brought us to this pass. We have two generators and a subsidised Nuclear Electric, which were brought about through a

[Mr. Alexander]

change in the law. I was looking to the White Paper to state that we can unscramble the problem by changing the law, but no such course is proposed.

We have excess capacity in power stations, but a raft of gas-fired plants is proposed and in the pipeline. They are being built not because they offer cheaper electricity or because they are needed but because the market is rigged to ensure that higher cost electricity is being sold while lower-cost coal-fired power states are likely to close. I regret that, in his statement to the House on Thursday, my right hon. Friend declined to exercise his powers to withhold further planning consents. If, as he says, it is a commercial matter—and it may be—why does application have to be made to him in the first place? Let the applicants get on with it. If he has a say, I ask him to exercise his power most urgently. He should realise the consequences of his decision for employment in the coal industry.

I conclude that, in the White Paper, the Government have not been able to do all that they could or should have done to provide the wider market for coal, which the Select Committee and those in the industry urged. I spent the morning at Bevercotes colliery in my constituency. I could not say to the people there that, because the market is rigged against them, I must go to the House of Commons and vote for the White Paper which will throw hundreds of them out of work. I could not do that because the heartbreak and uncertainty in north Nottinghamshire is too much. I cannot vote for that, so I fear that I cannot support my right hon. Friend.

7.36 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Many hon. Members have been going down memory lane, which has caused me to reflect on the six years that I spent as an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on energy. It was an interesting time for me in personal terms. The six years left me with an abiding impression of the way in which our energy debates were determined by the modern day equivalent of a bunch of barons. There was Baron Rooke of British Gas versus Baron BP or Baron Shell. There was Baron Marshall of the nuclear power industry and the Central Electricity Generating Board versus Baron Coal.

One thing that all the barons had in common was the fact that they controlled the information given to the House and, I suspect, to the Government. I certainly saw the manipulation of information to the Opposition when it suited Baron Rooke to oppose the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 or, when it suited him, he did an about-turn and choked off any information when he had done a deal with Lord Walker to privatise British Gas. That has been repeated in energy matters for decades.

I therefore approach all White Papers with enormous scepticism. I recall vividly the meetings with Baron Marshall when he ran the CEGB. When we asked about the decommissioning costs, he would tell us that they appeared in the annual accounts. That was until he had to sign a potential balance sheet when, suddenly, the real books were revealed and we ended up with a £1·2 billion levy for the nuclear industry. We have good reason to be profoundly sceptical of all the figures and projections.

All that the privatisation of energy has done is to multiply the barons. We now have a group of lesser barons who run the regional electricity companies. The Secretary of State does not know about people's feelings. Hon. Members should imagine the feelings in communities such as mine. The jobs of thousands of valley customers of the South Wales electricity company may be destroyed because the South Wales electricity company is investing in a new gas-fired plant on Teesside. Will those captive customers be allowed to use the one power source that they should have? Will they be allowed to get an alternative source of electricity to light their homes? They will not be able to do so. They are captive customers to a new group of barons who already show all the symptoms of the larger barons in jostling for power and position.

I recall sitting in the House in the 1966 Parliament when the Labour Government published a White Paper on fuel. Its simple, basic, unchallenged assumption was that we should create electricity mostly by burning oil which would cost only a few cents a barrel for ever and a day. Dozens of pits were closed on the basis that such economic and financial assumptions were accurate. We now know that, as a result of one week's skirmish in the middle east in 1973, all those assumptions were destroyed.

The lesson to learn is that we should not become dependent on imported supplies which are supported at cheap prices. We must be aware of the speed at which we forget the lessons that we should have learnt. We are already forgetting the lesson that we should not become dependent on imports of coal or on any other imported form of energy wherever possible. We should maintain flexibility and diversity. We shall not do that by closing the reserves of coal for ever and a day.

I now make the case on behalf of my pit, Taff Merthyr. Other hon. Members have asked where the markets are. The only market for Taff Merthyr pit is the collection of power stations at Aberthaw and Uskmouth, 15 miles down the road. The coal goes by rail from Taff Merthyr 15 or 16 miles straight into the power stations of south Wales. Welsh coal supplies Welsh power stations to provide Welsh electricity. At the moment, demand is down. If the Aberthaw-Uskmouth combination of power stations get back to their normal consumption—we hope that that will happen when we have a viable economy—they will require about 4 million tonnes. That could come from the Tower colliery, from private licensed mining in south Wales or from opencast mining. It should come from Taff Merthyr.

If the market picks up, the unbelievable alternative—the power stations are designed to take low volatile coal—is either Vietnamese or Russian coal. Such coal would be imported at Bristol Avonmouth and carted across the estuary to a power station 15 miles away from pits that had been closed. When there are doubts and worries, and when we are talking about long-term trends, why would anyone make such a crazy decision which will destroy opportunities and jobs? [HON. MEMBERS: "The Government would."] Let us hope and pray that the Government will not make such a decision and that, at the last minute, they will decide to see sense. I say that especially to the Secretary of State for Wales.

At various times, the Secretary of State and I have collaborated to promote what his Department calls the "Source Wales Initiative", which is a major effort to encourage people to buy Welsh products so that by a form of import substitution we can create new jobs in Wales. What a joke it is for us to spend all our time promoting the "Source Wales Initiative" while the Secretary of State is

party to the closure of the one source of energy available at present, which is next door to a Welsh power station which needs the coal to produce electricity for Wales.

I beg the Secretary of State not to stand behind the fig leaf of consultation or of privatisation. It is a cruel hoax to tell people at Taff Merthyr that a private investor will come to take over. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said forcefully, that is a possibility for Betws. However, he and I know that the future of Taff Merthyr is tied into the power station argument and into the contracts between the present barons. I hope that the Secretary of State will not try to pretend that that is a future option for Taff Merthyr.

Unless the Secretary of State for Wales gets better assurances, he should not pretend that there will be real consultation. We do not know about that, although I have asked him repeatedly, including personally last Thursday, what consultation will take place. The Taff Merthyr lodge has asked only for professional mining engineering advice to be taken. Such mining engineers know the seams, the industry and the area well and they believe that future reserves can be mined economically. All that we have asked is that our case be heard before an independent review inquiry, which is part and parcel of the industry's rights. That has been denied us from day one.

The Secretary of State says that Taff Merthyr was saved from closure last August. The workers there did not concede closure, although there was a sense of resignation and disbelief. People have not left the pits. Since October, they have clung to the belief that some common sense would prevail with British Coal, with the Government and with the Secretary of State.

7.45 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I have had the privilege of speaking in most of the coal debates since I was elected in 1983. I am delighted to have the opportunity of doing the same today. My constituency had three pits in 1983; it has none now. However, it has the headquarters of the Selby coalfield and the headquarters of Yorkshire Electricity. I declare an interest in that my law firm acts for many companies involved in energy, and for their customers and their suppliers. In common with all hon. Members, I have the ultimate interest that all constituents are consumers of electricity.

I have always argued that there must be a balanced and diverse energy policy. The precise mix of fuels must be a decision for the marketplace. It has to be determined ultimately by customer choice and by competition. The first dividend of that policy after privatisation is the cuts in charges by the electricity companies, which are being announced.

I have no doubt that coal can compete effectively in that environment, provided it plays on a level playing field. Unfortunately for coal, it has not had and does not have a level playing field. Everyone else in the energy sector is out in the private sector, with the freedoms that that involves and with the additional opportunities for marketing. Coal alone is still stuck with the constraints of public ownership.

If coal had been privatised in the 1980s along with electricity generation, as I believe it should have been, there would have been a different shape to privatisation, with coalfields and coal-fired power stations being put together to sell electricity directly to consumers. Instead, coal was left with the problem of being able to sell insignificant quantities only through the generators. That is the root of the current problems. I hope that the privatisation process announced in the White Paper will give the opportunity for restructuring in the industry which will be the best guarantee of the long-term success of the coal industry.

If the coal industry was a competitor with the generators for selling electricity, their attitude to buying coal would be very different. Unfortunately, that could not happen in the 1980s, because of the militancy of the National Union of Mineworkers. It was obvious that the privatisation of coal in the 1980s would have run into severe difficulties. In a very real sense, the NUM was the creator of the myths about closure in the 1980s, and was the author of its own misfortunes, because it prevented the coal industry from being privatised alongside electricity generation.

I still believe that coal can catch up on lost opportunities. I was not prepared to accept the statement last October, for a number of specific reasons. I could not accept the arbitrary closure of viable pits. Most people in the industry to whom I spoke and whose advice I trusted suggested that there were between 10 and 15 viable pits in the industry.

There was no independent review of pits or of their prospects. There was no opportunity for private sector involvement. Pits were to be closed without the opportunity being provided for others to purchase them. The timetable given in October was that dictated by the generation contracts due for the end of this month. This meant that there was no linkage between those decisions and the nuclear review, or the question of import substitution, or the review of mineral planning guidance for opencasting, or the question whether orimulsion was desirable, or the question of the French link.

Those issues have been addressed in the White Paper. Of the 10 to 15 viable pits, 12 are to be retained. In addition, Maltby is to be put into development and Betws will clearly find an acceptable buyer in the free market. The opportunity for private sector involvement will be very substantial indeed. Already, many companies are expressing an interest in buying pits. They will now be given the opportunity to do so, because it is quite clear that no pit can be shut down without an opportunity being provided for others to buy it and operate it successfully.

The Boyds report and the Select Committee report have given us a valuable basis of information for decision making which was not available last October. Above all, the provision of the subsidy has given——

Mr. Redmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there anything in "Erskine May" that can reduce the amount of rubbish that is being talked by Conservative Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was not a point of order.

Mr. Batiste: I hope that I will be given injury time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Opposition really do not like listening to reality. They prefer to live in a world of their own mythology.

The £700 million-worth of subsidy—the range of subsidy spoken of in the Select Committee report—will give us the opportunity to keep open the viable pits while the nuclear review takes place. It will give the opportunity for import substitution. There is already a welcome change

[Mr. Batiste]

in the weighing of the priorities under the mineral planning guidance, so that opencasting in green belt sites is unlikely to be granted planning consent in future. Orimulsion is being cut.

Moreover, I am quite sure that we shall find ways of redressing the balance on the French link, although all the information that I have suggests that, if the French link were closed down, a large part of the saving would not come to coal, because the southern electricity companies would want to reopen oil-fired power stations in the south.

I have already said that those issues have been addressed in the White Paper, and the White Paper now deserves support in a way that the October statement did not. Nevertheless, there will be forces in British Coal that will do their best, in the weeks to come as last weekend, to undermine the process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) suggested that those elements wanted to buy the industry themselves on the best terms available. I suggest that there is a simpler explanation—that many people in British Coal simply do not want to face up to a competitive environment. Marketing has hardly been a conspicuous success of British Coal, and I believe that many independent companies, given an opportunity to mine coal on a much larger scale, will find markets that British Coal has been quite unable to find for itself.

I would not support indefinite subsidy. I have never believed that we should swap jobs from one industry to another, which is what indefinite subsidies amount to. Nevertheless, I believe that there is a valid case for providing the funds to enable British Coal to make the transition to the private sector and to give it the opportunity, which I believe it can grasp, to survive and prosper in the private sector.

The NUM militancy this weekend—in the form of the announcement of the strike on Friday—is a gesture, and I hope that it will be seen as nothing more than that. It should nevertheless act as a considerable warning to those who work in the industry that, henceforth, they have to look to their customers rather than to the entrenched attitudes of the past. If the coal industry is to have a future, as I believe it will, that future will depend not on silly gestures but on its satisfying its customers that it will be a reliable supplier.

The Government have looked at all the options. They have adopted many of the Select Committee's recommendations. I commend the recommendations in the White Paper to the House, and congratulate the Government on having moved so far since their statement in October.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The 10-minute restriction ends at 8 pm, but may I make a plea to all hon. Members to restrict their speeches to 10 minutes thereafter?

7.56 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The crisis in the coal industry relates to the botched privatisation of electricity, the architects of which—Lords Parkinson and Wakeham—are in the other place. That privatisation left a ticking timebomb, which exploded in the face of the President of the Board of Trade on 13 October last. Instead of doing something radical about it, the right hon. Gentleman stood there like a cartoon character, blackened by the blast.

Our coal industry is a world-beating industry. It is the most sophisticated and safest deep coal mining industry in the world and produces the cheapest deep-mined coal in Europe. Nevertheless, the White Paper does nothing whatever for the industry. It takes us no further than the statement of 13 October. If anything can be said about the White Paper, it is that it is a masterly deception. I remind the House that, in paragraph 23 of its report, the Select Committee observed:

> "Classifying pits in this way is far from easy. Not only does the performance of individual pits vary, but British Coal has a very flat supply curve . . . Thus a small change in production costs or price can transfer a large number of deep mines from profit to loss or vice versa."

In other words, a slight change could alter the fortunes of all the 31 collieries now scheduled for closure within one to two years.

I would also refer the House to paragraph 266 of the Select Committee report, which contains a menu of options that could have widened the market significantly. It is sad that the Secretary of State has not taken any of them on board. We refer to the displacement of imported coal or oil subsidies. We talk of removing the non-leviable status of electricity imported from France; we talk of requiring flue gas desulphurisation for stations burning orimulsion, proposing that that could be provided by moneys from the nuclear levy; we talk of restricting combined cycle gas turbine stations from operating permanently on baseload and of how higher stock levels could be controlled; we talk of reducing opencast mining.

That menu adds up to 36·5 million tonnes of coal on top of the contracts that have already been signed involving 40 million tonnes and subsequently 30 million tonnes per year. In other words, there is a substantial market for coal. I find it sad that Conservative Members who put their names to the Select Committee report now seek to distance themselves from it. I have heard hon. Members say today that the form of words in the report gave the drift of the Committee's conclusions, but, because of the lateness of the hour, did not express very clearly what its members thought. Yet our conclusion was clear. We said that many of our recommendations would provide opportunities for a larger market for coal beyond that which we were advocating for subsidy and we advocated that price support should be given to 19 million tonnes of coal within that much larger market.

At the same time, however, we said that that price support should be tapered so that, as British coal prices came nearer to world market prices, the subsidy would taper and eventually disappear. The evidence to the Select Committee showed clearly that British Coal was on course to becoming fully competitive within two or three years. It showed also that once British Coal reached full competitiveness, the price support would disappear.

Dr. Hampson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clapham: No, I am sorry. There is a strict time limit and I want to be brief.

Let us consider what the White Paper does not do. It rejects the reform of the nuclear levy, curbing French imports and restrictions on the use of orimulsion. It also rejects the reduction in the output of opencast coal. It also rejects increased coal subsidies to the electricity market for

retaining the regional electricity companies' franchise. Conservative Members must accept that we are talking in terms of subsidising 16 million tonnes of coal for the electricity supply industry within the context of the franchise market.

The franchise market is extremely important. The regional electricity companies will agree to back-to-back contracts. We suggested that the franchise should be extended until 1998. That would have given the coal industry great stability during the period of change as it moved to full competitiveness.

We also referred to removing market discrimination against coal. That proposal was also rejected by the White Paper. Similarly, the White Paper rejects curbing the dash for gas. That is intriguing because there are two references in the White Paper to gas being more expensive than coal. However, the President claims that he cannot intervene in the market to ensure that we restrict gas in the way suggested by the Select Committee.

The Select Committee suggested that priority should be given to sour gas projects. We also suggested that the next priority should be combined heat and power projects. We also suggested that gas should be restricted from baseload generation. No other country in the world uses gas for baseload generation. That is extremely important because gas is much more flexible for follow loading than baseload.

The menu of options amounted to a total market of 62 million tonnes. However, the President has not entered into the market that we provided. He has rejected all our proposals. As a result, the collieries that he talks about surviving for two years or so will disappear because there is no market for their coal. The right hon. Gentleman has provided no opportunity in the market for the 12 collieries that are to be given market testing.

What did the President mean when he referred to development status for Maltby? Will Maltby's work force be made redundant? Will the drivages be handed over to contractors? At the end of the day, when Maltby is ready to produce coal, will the work force be brought back to mine the mineral, or will the contractors receive the contracts to mine the coal? If the latter is the case, the right hon. Gentleman should come clean and say that that is what he intends.

Clearly, the White Paper does not, in any way, meet any of the Select Committee's recommendations. As I have said, it takes us only a very little way from the position at 13 October last year. Anyone who has had any connection with the mining industry will be aware that its privatisation will do nothing for the industry except return it to the bad old days. The Opposition oppose that rigorously. Privatisation will not help coal mining.

We can understand how the miners feel when we consider the day of action on Friday. Over the past five months, the delay has been orchestrated deliberately to spin miners off into redundancy. There is no doubt that the extension of the redundancy terms to 13 December is also designed to spin miners away from the 12 collieries for whose coal there is no market. We know that those collieries will eventually close in a year or so.

I support the miners' day of action and I understand how they feel. They feel that they have been badly treated, left with no hope for five months and, at the end of the day, that the White Paper simply proposes the closure of the industry.

8.5 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): It is a privilege to take part, very briefly I trust, in another debate on the coal industry as I have taken part in and and responded to such debates in the past.

Whenever there is a discussion about the coal industry, no matter on what side of the House one sits, there is an anxiety about the fact that we are dealing with an industry which is changing. Indeed, for many years that change has meant decline. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) said earlier, two charts in the White Paper sum up that change most vividly.

The chart on page 19 of the White Paper reveals that there was a take-up of 200 million tonnes of coal in 1960. Electricity generation took 26 per cent. of that; industrial consumption accounted for about 21 per cent. and the domestic fuel market took up 28 per cent. When that chart is contrasted with the one directly below it on page 19, it is clear that today the industrial and domestic markets have shrunk to 7 per cent. or less while the percentage dependent on generation has increased to about 80 per cent. The volume of take-up in 1992 was 101 million tonnes.

That is the base problem. Although enormous environmental and security of supply pressures have undoubtedly played their part in the reduction of the industrial use of coal, the main changes have probably arisen as a result of offers of other energy sources. They include oil and subsequently gas from the North sea and the development of nuclear power which now comprises 18 or 19 per cent. of generating energy. Those sources have entered a field where none existed before.

That has occurred although amazing efforts have been made to sustain and develop the coal industry. There has been huge investment causing great productivity. Volumes are now approaching 100 million tonnes from some 20 pits. Although there has been a massive reduction in manpower and consumption, the efficiency of British Coal-produced products at the pithead has steadily improved.

How can we react to the present situation and the calls in October for further immediate closures? I am bound to say that I have some sympathy with those who believe that the privatisation of electricity is part of the problem. I suspect that if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who is on the Front Bench now, had had something to do with it, it would have turned into rather a different animal. However, there is a huge duopoly in electricity generation, and there is no doubt that a duopoly is no substitute for a competitive market.

I was puzzled by paragraph 10.44 of the White Paper, which reads:

> "The DGES made a further report on 23 February. Although the Director General sees possible scope for future improvements in RECs' purchasing practices and in the regulatory regime, this report confirmed that he found no basis for concluding that the RECs had breached their economic purchasing conditions."

Of course, the economic purchasing conditions require them to buy their fuel at the cheapest possible price. However, paragraph 10.45 states:

> "The Director General did, however, record that he was not convinced that the costs associated with producing electricity from coal fired plant were sufficient to justify contract prices as high as those offered to the RECs by National Power and PowerGen."

[Sir Giles Shaw]

It is not good enough to allow a duopoly of this sort to produce prices which are extremely doubtful as far as the director general is concerned. I sometimes wonder why the director general cannot take to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission earlier than 1995 a reference to the generators, which is included in paragraph 10.48 of the White Paper. Pressures should be placed on the market for the generation and supply of electricity which would even out the problem which, I suspect, was created with the privatisation of electricity.

With the present position, and with the arrangements which are contained in the White Paper, at least there are two or three encouraging prospects. The first must be that the President of the Board of Trade has recommended bringing forward the nuclear review to start in 1993. In that review, the need for a levy may well be discounted. I should like to see the nuclear levy removed as soon as possible, in so far as it affects the costs of decommissioning. There is no reason why it should be lumbered on top of present coal industry costs.

There is the prospect—amazingly, from the Government—of a subsidy on the tonnes of coal to try to close the inevitable gap between the world price for coal and the price for domestically produced coal. That has been a difficult problem for the coal industry to crack in the past 10, 15 or 20 years, but there is an opportunity for it to be done. The closer the gap becomes between the domestic price and the world price—which is the imported price—the better the chance of turning some of the 6 million tonnes which are imported for steam-produced electricity into a United Kingdom coal-produced product. That is an encouragement.

The second encouragement is that I suspect that there will be a measure which will get more interest into British Coal in terms of marketing the product in markets other than simply the domestic one. If coal which is produced in the United Kingdom reaches the world price, there is no reason whatever why the product cannot be marketed in Germany, even at the transported price, and undercut German electricity generation.

Over the years, I suspect that British Coal has lacked a management thrust which is market oriented. When Mr. Malcolm Edwards worked for British Coal, we certainly got a real thrust on selling more coal for more uses within the United Kingdom. I am surprised that British Coal is less evidently a marketing company than it should be in the present circumstances.

There is a call for an energy strategy to be published. I note from the White Paper that there is to be an annual energy statement. I should like to know whether it will be a genuine audit or simply a state-of-play report. If there is to be a case for taking energy from all sources into the position of being able to influence how the market develops, it should be a proper strategy document. It should be able to deal with all energy resources, it should be updated yearly, and it should become a benchmark for the development of what I hope will be a competitive industry—although on a different basis. With all that, I suspect that there is a chance that the decline will not continue as it has in the past. Equally, I have no doubt that the ultimate decision on whether the industry survives depends on the price of coal which is delivered to consumers.

8.13 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I speak with 39 years of experience in the industry before I became a Member of Parliament. I sometimes find it amusing when people ask me what I did when I worked. When I worked, I was a miner.

If the ill-considered statement made by the Board of Trade in October announcing the list of 39 pits threatened with closure did anything at all to advance the interests of the nation as a whole and the coal industry in particular, it can be seen only in the flurry of interest in energy issues and the embarrassing decision, after universal public pressure, for the Government to back off from the original recommendations and try to salvage the reputation of the President of the Board of Trade by producing a White Paper which reads like a less reputable second-hand car salesman's handbook—promising much but delivering little.

I was intrigued by the British Coal press release dated 25 March:

"British Coal has discussed with Government the conclusions reached in its Coal Review White Paper on the market for coal and considered the consequences for the size and structure of the business. It welcomes the decision to make available transitional financial assistance, with the objective of enabling the electricity generators to buy additional quantities of British coal, and the opportunity this can provide to secure the future for a larger number of collieries."

That is an intriguing press release when one refers back to the British Coal press release dated 21 January 1993—this is 18 press releases before the one which I have just quoted.

On 21 January 1993, the chairman of British Coal, Mr. Neil Clarke, said:

"We hear and read a lot about possible solutions to the public demand for a fair deal for coal. What would clearly be no solution would be some kind of fudge. What counts in the end is the amount of coal which is burned as part of the energy mix in our power stations. And for us, of course, how much of that is British Coal.

It has been suggested that our coal needs a massive subsidy to stay in the market. That is nonsense. We have not sought a subsidy and it is mischievous to plant the notion that very large amounts of electricity users' or taxpayers' money is needed to featherbed our minds."

Who can trust British Coal when it makes two different comments publicly?

I would prefer to trust what was said by the British Association of Colliery Management:

"Mere tampering is insufficient. Without radical changes in the commercial environment in which the UK coal industry has to operate, there can be no radical change in the number of collieries originally scheduled for closure."

That is nearer the truth than the comments made by British Coal today.

The White Paper highlights the record of the Government's attempts to use mining industry issues to destroy the National Union of Mineworkers, betray their erstwhile friends in the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and, ultimately, create conditions for the remnants of the coal industry to be sold off to their friends for a pittance.

Privatisation, as the ultimate aim, has overshadowed all of the events of the past few months. Although the general impression is that the introduction of legislation some time in the future—the President of the Board of Trade mentioned two years—will dispose of a vital industry which has been owned by the British people for 46 years, the truth is that action has already been taken in introducing private contractors into the mining operations

of British Coal, and is a major step towards privatisation. A Bill to denationalise the industry will only finalise the process which has been taking place for some time.

Ellington colliery in Northumberland, where many of my constituents are employed, is an example. Development work and surface installations are already in the hands of private contractors. The coal production section of the mine is to be handed over to private operators. I understand that it is probably the first time that that has been done in the United Kingdom. Such back-door privatisation is taking place up and down the coalfields, and the White Paper is the next progression towards the final disposal of a valuable national asset.

How does the White Paper respond to public and political demand for a viable coal industry which is fully equipped to produce coal at dramatically improved output levels and rapidly reducing costs, able to take its place as an important primary source of energy, allowing Britain to be less reliant on foreign sources of energy and potentially able to be the bedrock for an expanding manufacturing industry—which is in decline at present, sadly, because of the Government's policies—with the possibility of recovery with proper Government support?

The White Paper produces no answers whatever to those problems. The distorted market remains. The private electricity industry operates a cosy monopoly in its part of the market. In a press report dated November 1992, an inspector suggested that five of the ancient Magnox stations in the heavily subsidised nuclear generating industry are at risk and should probably be closed down. If the stations are closed down, what will replace nuclear generation? It must be coal.

It has been maintained that the famous French link is a quid pro quo arrangement, whereby France tops up Britain's energy supply at peak times and Britain supplies France at peak times. However, the system has never worked as intended. When I inquired last year in a written question, I discovered that the flow was heavily in one direction. That has apparently been going for some years. The figures showed that, in 1990, the ratio of electricity supplied to France to that supplied from Britain was 255:1. In 1991, it was 1,091:1.

The President of the Board of Trade said today that a programme was under way to halve the ratio in eight years. So in eight years, the figures for delivery from France to Britain will be down to 500:1. That is not a bad target. In 16 years, we might have electricity flowing both ways. That is yet another case of clear commercial interests superseding national interests.

If the ratio had been balanced the other way, the French Government, whatever their political complexion —there has just been a change of Government—would have taken action. They would not simply offer vague promises for the future. I have been a member of the Council of Europe for four years, so I have some experience of dealing with the French, as have some of my colleagues. In dealing with the French, we should never trust them as far as we could throw the whole French nation.

We must consider another aspect of the issue. We talk about the generating industry as the main consumer of coal, but there are other consumers to consider. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) talked about the gas reserves. He said that they were finite and likely to run out fairly soon. How long fairly soon might be remains to be seen, because we do not know how much gas we have. He also said that, when it runs out, we may need to import gas. Then someone else would fix the price.

I have been here for the whole debate tonight, but no one has mentioned the production of gas from coal. The technology has been developed and used in Britain. I visited a plant in Scotland some years ago. The technology has progressed fairly well. However, I have recently read a document form Texaco in which it says that it has produced gas from coal for 30 years. Four plants around the world have produced gas efficiently and economically for 30 years. If we close down coal mines and decimate our coal industry, where will we obtain coal if we need to produce gas from coal at some time in the future? The mines will be closed. I look particularly at the north-east of England.

As the House will know, I am sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers. My section of the union, the colliery officials and staffs association, has members at every colliery in Britain. That gives me an interest in the future of each and every mine. The members of my section are specialists, and their morale has not been improved by the content of the statement on Thursday or the White Paper.

The White Paper merely produces some limited short-term answers to long-term problems. Too many questions are left unanswered not by the disastrous proposal to write off huge coal reserves in the pits which are to close—for which future generations will condemn us —but by the proposal to mothball six mines. Two of the pits to be mothballed are Westoe and Easington in the north-east. They are both working reserves under the North sea.

My long experience in the coal mining industry has shown me clearly that it is possible to mothball mines in the short term—for perhaps one or two months—but that beyond that there are tremendous difficulties. I have practical experience of the deterioration of mines. One can go into a mine on Monday morning and find that, over the weekend, some of the equipment has become unworkable. The roof has pressed on the mechanical chocks which support the roof, and it is necessary to detonate explosives to blow them out. That is merely after a weekend.

After a long weekend or a holiday weekend, the problem is exaggerated. After a fortnight or three weeks' holiday, it is exaggerated even more. I have experience of circumstances in which three days of production have been lost in getting the mine working again after a holiday. What will happen when the mine is not worked for perhaps months or a year? The mines will not be mothballed for that period: they will be closed.

Westoe and Easington mines in my region are both under the North sea. They are both prone to water ingress. I have had experience of the North sea coming into the mine. One cannot keep that back unless one is King Canute. Those are the problems which arise from mothballing. So it is with some pessimism that I say to anyone who is involved in the pits which are to be mothballed, "Forget about them ever opening again. They are gone." Not only the mines which are on the list to be closed, but those which are to be mothballed will be lost. That is a sad thing to say to anyone with whom I have been associated in the mining industry.

Anyone with practical experience of deep mining operations will know that the high cost of maintaining roadways, roof conditions, water pumping operations,

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

ventilation and machinery is prohibitive if there is not production to pay for it. The Minister might like to respond to a question put to me by a miner: what arrangements are to be made to cover redundancy payments after December 1993 to miners involved in maintaining the mothballed mines if a decision is made to close them in 1994 or 1995?

The Government should understand that, if they abandon a significant proportion of our coal reserves, the country will see it as a largely irreversible decision of historic significance to the United Kingdom. The Government will not be forgiven for their folly.

8.25 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I am pleased to speak in the debate as a Member for a Nottingham constituency and someone who has lived the whole of his life in Nottinghamshire. From sheer contact, I have a great respect for the mining industry, the key industry in our country, and, indeed, for the contribution that it makes, has made and hopefully will make in the future to meeting Britain's energy requirements.

I have always believed, largely for the reason given by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), in a four-fuel policy for Britain. I also lived through the time when we decided that oil would be the fuel and closed many coal mines in Nottinghamshire. I was serving in local government at that time, as chairman of the finance committee of Nottinghamshire county council. We combined with Derbyshire to redevelop the Erewash valley to replace mining jobs. I thought then that we had learned the lesson that a Government of any persuasion should be wary of going for a particular fuel

Therefore, I believe that we should have a four-fuel policy, and that deep-mined coal should play an important part as that fourth fuel. I also feel that, in Nottinghamshire, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers has proved itself again and again. It is supportive and has much higher productivity figures than other coalfields, pit for pit and seam for seam. It deserves the support of the Government.

I agree with both Conservative and Opposition Members who have suggested that the current problem has occurred as a result of the way in which electricity was privatised. There are those—we have heard them speak from the Conservative Benches—who believe that the market is the master and should be the ultimate arbiter of everything. I happen to be a different sort of Tory. I believe that the market should be an important mechanism by which judgments should be made, but that it should not be the master and the arbiter.

I disagreed with some of the remarks by Opposition Members about the market. One must accept that the way in which electricity has been privatised means that the market is currently the master of our energy policy. It was not certain that the core contracts, however much Opposition Members may deride them, would be signed. There was no reason why the generators should have signed the core contracts. They have every ability to sit on their coal stocks.

There is almost one year's coal burn on the ground. The generators could use that £1 billion-worth of stock and import coal at a lower price than that produced in Britain. So it was not a certainty that the core contracts would be signed. I am glad that they have been signed, because that enables us to continue to the next stage.

My concern all along has been what will happen in five years. The original core contract of 30 million tonnes in five years' time does not represent the production of the deep-mined coal industry in Britain. At worst, 30 million tonnes from all sources could mean about 20 million tonnes of deep-mined coal and between 10 million and 15 million tonnes of opencast coal and that does not represent a core industry—an industry of a size that can be regarded as an industry. That has been my concern and I have submitted that evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee and to the inquiry.

As far as the White Paper is concerned, if we accept that the Secretary of State has certain powers, he has done everything that he possibly could within them. He has persuaded the Government to agree to a £500 million subsidy and has got a couple of hundred million pounds for the redevelopment of certain sectors. The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) is present and he knows what happened in Mansfield and other areas when the last group of pits was closed. Additional money is helpful. As it happens, Nottinghamshire is fortunate, as it is on the M1, it is a centralised area and it has an adaptable work force. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has also done many other things which, in the interests of time, I do not intend to list.

The White Paper and the vote tonight are not the end of the story. It is not a case of either-or, and when the vote is taken it will not be the end of the Government's commitment or involvement, nor will it be the end of what they need to do.

It has already been said that we have already made a move in the right direction on opencast mining. I agree with Opposition Members who mentioned the true cost of opencast, which is very high indeed for people who often have to suffer 10 or 15 years of blight. More needs to be done, based on the statement from the Department of the Environment. In particular, more needs to be done to protect green-field sites, wherever they may be, from opencast mining. I am not convinced that we have finished with opencast and I see no reason why the amount should not be reduced.

Secondly, I am pleased that the nuclear review has been brought forward as there is a lot to play for and I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) about the nuclear levy. The nuclear industry also wants to play its part in supplying Britain's energy requirements and one can visualise that there could be a trade-off between closing Magnox stations and opening another pressurised water reactor. All those who have been interested in the energy scene recognise that PWRs are the only way to generate nuclear energy competitively and there could be a trade-off by closing Magnox stations, to increase the coal burn in that way.

In my judgment, it boils down to how can we increase the market for coal, as recommended by the Trade and Industry Select Committee and accepted by the Government, with the help of the subsidy which is to be made available. Power stations are the market for coal. When the electricity generating industry was privatised, 32 coal-fired power stations were handed over to the generators on 1 December 1992. In terms of modernity and wearing out, they range from power stations built in 1957 to those finished in 1974. The same applies to power

stations run by National Power and PowerGen, except that PowerGen's latest power station, Fiddler's Ferry, was completed in 1971.

First, we must realise that many old power stations are mothballed and are not being used. The House and the Government should seek to ensure that we concentrate on the power stations that are desperately necessary to maintain coal production from deep-mined pits at about 30 million tonnes in the long term. I understand that only eight of the 32 are essential, and those are large, long-life power stations located close to long-life, low-cost mines. The list includes West Burton, Eggborough, Aberthaw B, Rugeley B, Drax, Ferrybridge C, Ratcliffe on Soar—the closest to my constituency—and Cottam. Another seven coal-fired power stations need to be retained if we are to encourage and to find the contracts necessary, over and above the core contract. They include: Thorpe Marsh, Ironbridge, Didcot, High Marnham, Drakelow C, Kingsnorth and Fiddler's Ferry.

I suggest to my colleagues that to encourage, support and assist British Coal, it is surely possible to negotiate one of the special contracts mentioned in the Select Committee report, which states that

"British Coal and the generators should explore alternative forms of contract of the types suggested by our witnesses and British Coal should seek to obtain contracts for part of its output extending beyond ten years."

It does not seem to me to be beyond the wit of man to negotiate for one of the power stations in the first or second list and to refit it with the sort of technology that the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) mentioned—combined heat and power from coal in which one uses a gas burn as well as coal to increase efficiency, which is environmentally clean—and to fix a contract with subsidised coal. That would seem to be a useful way to use the subsidies that the Government are providing for an additional contract—over and above the core contract—for one of those power stations. In return the station would be brought up to standard and up to date with one of the new technologies which was invented in this country. The countries that we exported it to are now offering it back.

Mr. Jack Thompson *rose*——

Mr. Lester: I am sorry but we are under the 10-minute rule and I am trying to ensure that other hon. Members can speak.

Sir Trevor Skeet: No, the 10-minute rule has finished.

Mr. Lester: I am under a voluntary 10-minute rule.

Tonight's vote is not the end of the story and there will be other opportunities which we must utilise. We must go in the direction of new technology.

If we are not able to protect the coal burn and coal-fired power stations, it will not matter what price we mine coal at as there will be no market for it. Because of my background and my commitment to my county, my heart is very much with the miners and I understand their problems, but my head is concerned with how we can best ensure the long-term future of Britain's energy supplies and, the deep-mined coal industry, and the part that it should play within that future.

8.36 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Earlier in the debate, there was some criticism of the miners and it was said that they should not contemplate strike action. It is a sign of miners' anxieties and their deep concern that even the traditionally moderate Nottinghamshire miners are balloting for strike action on Friday. It has also been said that the problems of the deep coal industry are the fault of the miners, who have not been flexible enough.

It is important to stress that miners in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country have done everything asked of them and more. During the past five years, they have increased productivity by 150 per cent. and they are producing coal at half the cost of German coal. The price of coal from pitheads throughout the country is the same as it was six years ago, yet our electricity bills have increased by 65 per cent. The British coal industry is the best and the most productive in Europe and, given their productivity record during the past five years, miners are entitled to ask what the President of the Board of Trade has been doing during the past five months.

Miners say—and they are right—that the White Paper has not produced one extra tonne of coal. It is a mouse of a White Paper and not a lion and it contains no energy policy for the nation, save that that policy will be dependent on market forces. It is important to define clearly the terms and consequences of the White Paper, because some hon. Members have said that it will save pits. As a result of it, however, 12 pits will close immediately and six will be mothballed. There is a strong feeling among the managers and workers in the industry that those pits will never reopen. There is also much scepticism about whether the 12 pits, the market testers, will survive for long.

The debate is about the market, but the Government have said exactly what they said in October. The only job that is saved by the White Paper is that of the President of the Board of Trade. Today, he has said, "I told you so" and been keen to justify his actions.

The core contract offered by the White Paper is for 40 million tonnes of coal next year and 30 million tonnes for the year after. I view the notion of the supplementary contract with suspicion, because, even this afternoon, the President of the Board of Trade was most unclear about its origin. The idea is that those contracts will force out imports, so that the price of British-produced coal falls below that of imported coal. Today, it has already been admitted, however, that only 8 million tonnes of imported coal is bought each year and only 6 million tonnes of that is steam coal for electricity.

It does not take 12 pits to produce 6 million tonnes of coal. When one considers that we have 45 million tonnes of stockpiled coal, the supplementary contract, however it is subsidised, will not work. The 12 pits, the market testers, will therefore not last long. There is great concern in the industry that market testing may last only while the present redundancy terms are on offer—to December this year. People in the coal industry, who have done so much for the country, are keen to know what reassurances the Government can give about that, but I suspect that none will be forthcoming.

As a consequence of the White Paper, the current number of pits will be reduced from 50 to 20, perhaps by

[Mr. Paddy Tipping]

Christmas. That is the real issue behind the White Paper and for that reason coal miners are being forced, in desperation, to look to strike action.

We have been told that the Government have been anxious about this matter and that a great deal of thought has been devoted to it. As a result of that concern, an extra £200 million will be made available to regenerate the coalfield communities. I challenge anyone to deny that the White Paper means that a further 4,000 miners' jobs will be lost in Nottinghamshire in the next two years. The knock-on effect of that will mean the loss of another 4,000 jobs. The effect on the local economy will be extremely severe, because £225 million will no longer flow into it. The loss of such spending power will hit north Nottinghamshire. In the past two years unemployment has gone up 70 per cent., but as a result of the White Paper, it will go up by another 100 per cent. What are the Government offering? Just £200 million nationally against a loss of £225 million in Nottinghamshire alone. The Government money will be spread over five years, so we are talking about £40 million against an instant loss of £225 million.

The people of Nottingham do not want the palliatives that are appended to the White Paper. The talk of a regional development agency based in Nottingham is fine. I was involved in discussions with the private sector five years ago to get such an agency off the ground. The idea for that agency developed in the east midlands; the only announcement that the Government have made about it, just last week, was about whether it should be based in Nottingham or Leicester. Such is the size of the prize offered to our area.

There is also talk of a major business park. I hope that it will be developed and I know where it will be located. The planning for it has come from the local authorities, although I accept that the finance may be raised in association with the private sector. What is on offer, however, is of little help to Nottinghamshire in its quest for a new future and a new vision.

In his peroration, the President of the Board of Trade spoke of looking to the future and our children. We want a new future in Nottinghamshire, one in which there is investment in infrastructure, training, people and jobs. We want investment in our future. The White Paper sells us out.

8.45 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): The context of the debate is that the House is being invited to confirm the closure of 18 pits with the loss of 20,000 mining jobs and 50,000 jobs overall. By any yardstick that is a grave matter.

I begin by congratulating the Chairman and members of the Trade and Industry Select Committee on their excellent report and the wealth of detail that it contains. I also pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade for his hard work and the way in which he has always made himself available to colleagues, often at short notice, for consultation. That has been greatly appreciated.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has accepted the principal recommendation of the Select Committee, the short-term subsidy to displace immediately the volume of imports. That has been agreed in the clear hope that it will enable our pits to produce coal at world market prices, at which point they will have a viable future, because they will continue to be able to displace at least the anticipated volume of imported coal.

I appreciate the other important steps that my right hon. Friend is proposing. I particularly welcome the decision that the closed and mothballed pits will be made available to the private sector. For some pits that will change nothing, for others it will mean a brief lifespan, but for yet others I believe that it will mean that they will continue large-scale coaling. That I welcome most warmly.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend has agreed to bring forward the nuclear review and that he has also agreed to high-level negotiations with the Government of France about the imbalance on the interconnector. I especially appreciate the prompt way in which he responded to my request for a meeting, just a week ago, on behalf of our major energy users, including such companies as ICI, Allied Steel and Pilkington. That meeting was held on Monday and, by Thursday, as a consequence, my right hon. Friend had included a relevant passage in the White Paper. I was delighted to hear just this morning from those involved that they expect to place a contract for seven years or more for the supply of 5 million tonnes of British coal a year. They will obtain power at a more favourable rate, by bypassing the pool, as a consequence of the arrangements that my right hon. Friend has made for them.

I very much regret, however, that by no stretch of the imagination can this White Paper be called an energy strategy; nor does it represent any meaningful levelling of the playing field. The market is heavily stacked against coal in the years ahead.

I recognise the restrictions under which my right hon. Friend had to operate. They also affected the Minister of State, who has played an important role. The shape of the energy market for the mid to late 1990s was decided in the late 1980s. Conscious decisions were taken then by industry and Government in the wake of the miners' strike of 1984-85 to turn away from coal. If there is one person more responsible than any other for the fact that significant numbers of pits are closing in the 1990s, he is none other than Arthur Scargill. No single factor more directly propelled the Government towards the dash for gas than the conviction that British coal and British mines could no longer be relied on. That was tragic.

While Sizewell B will displace about 3 million tonnes of coal when it comes on stream in the next 18 months, the new gas stations that are in the pipeline will displace 30 million tonnes. Between them, that equates to 31 pits—hence the logic behind the infamous announcement of 13 October.

As a result, base contracts are falling between now and 1 April next year from 65 million to 30 million tonnes. No wonder British Coal doubts whether new markets can be found, apart from on the margins. I accept that this is not of my right hon. Friend's making; he inherited the situation. His room for manoeuvre has been severely limited and I do not doubt that he has strenuously exerted himself.

My right hon. Friend speaks of competition in the energy market, but he knows very well that the future of that market is heavily rigged against coal. If the miners produced coal at the pithead and gave it away for free, the

market for coal would still inevitably and drastically contract. If that is not a rigged market, I do not know what is.

Nuclear energy has guaranteed access to the market for every kilowatt that it produces. Gas has privileged access, given the cosy relationship between the independent power producers and the regional electricity companies. So does EDF, through the French interconnector. The contract with EDF is an enormous scandal. We are exempting the French from the fossil fuel levy, even though much of the electricity that they send us is produced by fossil fuel. Furthermore, we credit the French back with that levy, in effect giving them a subsidy for their coal and nuclear industries. For that privilege, we are accepting the highest-cost electricity on the United Kingdom market —the Select Committee identified the cost as 3·4p per kilowatt—and we are closing down six pits. That is entirely unacceptable to me and, I venture to think, to the country. I am glad that my right hon. Friend has undertaken that this will be considered at the highest level of Government with the new Government of France.

My right hon. Friend makes great play of the scale of the subsidy—yesterday he referred to £300 million or £400 million. Given that one third of the 31,000 jobs threatened last October are to be saved, however, this is precisely the sum that will be saved from the £1·2 billion package of redundancy pay offered by the Secretary of State last October. So the net cost to the taxpayer of this subsidy, taking account of what is saved in redundancy money, is nil.

The subsidy, without a market, equals stockpiles. We already have stockpiles of 45 million tonnes. What is needed much more than subsidy is markets. I absolutely acknowledge my right hon. Friend's sincerity in saying that the purpose of the subsidy is to give the 12 reprieved pits prospects for future viability——

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Churchill: I am sorry, no.

I have grave doubts about whether the measures announced will be enough to provide a market to sustain the reprieved pits and to stave off further major closures, even in the next two years. If the market for coal is not to collapse, the Government must deal with the two factors that impinge on it most directly—the EDF link, which they have already agreed to deal with, and, principally, the gas stations.

The greatest weakness of the White Paper is that it fails to cover what will happen in the next three years, when there will be a 40 per cent. surplus in generating capacity. It is clearly impossible for all the stations to operate on baseload continuously. A nuclear station can operate in no other way and coal cannot operate economically in any other way. Gas can be switched on and off and is therefore ideally suited to load following. Nuclear power not only enjoys a £1·2 billion subsidy, but it has guaranteed access to the market, and gas has privileged access. Coal has neither.

Left to market forces in this heavily rigged market, the large coal stations will inevitably go to the wall. Meanwhile, electricity consumers will be invited to pay the full capital and operating costs of the new gas stations, a burden that is as undesirable as it is unnecessary.

In consequence of this policy, the Government will be adding to the burden on the consumer; they will decimate the market for coal and with it the mining industry. They will burn gas reserves 50 per cent. more quickly than before. The United Kingdom is already a net importer of energy and within a generation we are likely to be running short of natural gas. The impact on the balance of payments could be devastating.

I must ask the Government to look again at this whole issue. The President says that he cannot break contracts and with that I agree. But I believe that he can restrict the gas stations to operating at 70 or 75 per cent. and offer the regional electricity companies the sweetener of an extension of their franchise, by way of compensation, at the 500 kW level. The consequence of that would be to provide an additional market for coal of 10 million tonnes on top of the 6 million tonnes that will result if a neutral flow is established across the interconnector. That, more than any other action, would positively underpin the hopes of my right hon. Friend for the future of the 12 pits. If he can agree to do that, I shall willingly support the Government in the Lobby tonight. Without such an assurance, I shall be unable to do so, as I would not wish to lend my support to a policy that could lead to the closure of some of the 12 pits within two years and, for some of them, even before Christmas.

8.58 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I represent a constituency containing two of the pits that are threatened with closure and an area where four are under threat. I was beginning to wonder whether I had become invisible, as I was not called in the last debate and have only just managed to get in in this one.

On two occasions I have sat through the rantings and ravings of the President of the Board of Trade. I have heard nothing new—he has just got louder and louder. Since the announcement of the Government's pit closures on 13 October last year, endless technical issues have been fought over. Reports have been made and plans have been drawn up. Today, we are debating what amounts to a sham introduced to buy off the Tory Back-Bench rebels. Since last Thursday, we have seen them fall one by one, save for a few hard liners, who may even vote with the Opposition tonight.

We have debated the future of the gas, coal and nuclear electricity industries and yet we still seem to be no further on than we were five months ago. In spite of the Government's grudging and temporary concessions over the future of some of the threatened pits, they have yet to address the concerns that lie at the heart of the problem or recognise that cost has more meaning than a profit and loss account. The cost of their programme of closures goes far beyond the industry and affects the wider local and national economy and society as a whole. They have yet to recognise that the cost of throwing 30,000 miners on the dole will be greater than keeping open the pits, many of which are profitable, and many more of which could be viable if only the Government would show a little common sense.

The Government have failed to recognise the true economics of the situation. The Select Committee on Trade and Industry has said that closure of the pits will cost £1·3 billion in 1993-94 and over £500 million in

[Mr. Kevin Hughes]

1994-95. The TUC has estimated that the cost of closing the pits will put £10 million per pit on the public sector borrowing requirement.

The future of Hatfield and Bentley collieries in my constituency still hangs in the balance and Doncaster as a whole will lose Rossington and Markham Main, which lie in the constituencies of my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). The overall cost to the region and to the Exchequer will be massive. Unemployment in Yorkshire and on Humberside is already costing £2·3 billion a year.

The President of the Board of Trade has told us that the case for closure is unanswerable. I believe, as do many right-thinking people and Members of Parliament, that the only unanswerable case is the one that argues for a strong and productive mining industry, with the 31 pits being kept open, mining coal for Britain's power. Let us take the examples of Hatfield and Bentley collieries in my constituency. Between them, they employ more than 1,200 people. Last year, they both proved profitable. Bentley made £6 million and Hatfield made £2 million. In an area where unemployment is well above the national average of 10·7 per cent., at 13·8 per cent., any news of further job cuts is devastating.

The Government clearly do not understand how difficult it is to create jobs in coalfield communities such as Doncaster. The industrial base of the area is narrow, which means that mining is central to the local economy, being one of the most important employers as well as an important buyer of services in local firms. The existing service jobs generally depend on the mining and manufacturing industries, both of which have been decimated in the past 14 years. The economy has remained substantially tied to the coal mining industry, in spite of heavy redundancies in the 1980s.

Businesses locally will be affected by the economic squeeze that the closures will undoubtedly bring. A survey conducted by the Doncaster chamber of commerce has suggested that the knock-on effect to local companies could be 4:1 and that 220 local businesses could be affected. I have already been contacted by the local market traders association and federations representing small businesses. Many of them can remember the difficulties that they faced during the 1984 strike and the debts and hardships that they experienced. They do not want to return to those lean times. They know that that would be a disaster for them and for the Doncaster economy.

Almost 3,000 jobs will be lost at the four collieries in the Doncaster area. In the past, miners have had the option of taking jobs outside that area, but that is no longer the position. Many miners will be made compulsorily redundant. Many other members of the British Coal staff will lose their jobs. There will be job losses in Doncaster, where several administrative functions have been centred.

Jobs may also be lost at the Thorpe Marsh power station, which is in my constituency. It takes coal from local pits. When those pits have been closed, how long will it be before the power station is closed?

Unemployment problems in the area will be especially difficult because all four local collieries that are under threat are in self-contained communities. In each of those communities the colliery is the principal employer. That makes retraining even more difficult, but it is necessary to give people the chance of a new career. Every effort must be made to create new jobs. There are fewer firms in new industries that are capable of absorbing those who have been made redundant.

Since 1984, nearly 10,000 men have lost their mining jobs in Doncaster. The measures that the Government have proposed to ease the impact of closures in Doncaster were much needed even before the new job cuts were announced. Doncaster has been attempting to gain development area status for some time. I hope that the Department of Trade and Industry will now see its way clear to implementing the pledge that was made on 13 October, and again today by the President of the Board of Trade, to upgrade Doncaster so that it secures development area status.

Estimates of the potential consequences of the closures on employment are worrying. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people are expected to lose their jobs if all the pits close. Even more people will be pushed into poverty. Unemployment in the Doncaster travel-to-work area now stands at about 14 per cent. It is expected to rise to 20 per cent. if the pits close. In some parts of Doncaster the unemployment figure is even higher.

The closure of collieries is already ripping the heart out of many local communities. Unemployment, financial hardship, poverty and disadvantage are putting a strain on welfare, housing, and social and health services. Lack of opportunity will turn young people away from their homes and community vitality will be hit. Youth unemployment in Doncaster is already about 3 per cent. higher than the national average.

Unemployment causes stress, social isolation and the loss of a sense of purpose and dignity. The cost can be measured in concrete financial terms as well as in social terms. The costs of closures have been massive, and the costs of the proposed closures will be devastating. People feel undervalued as decisions are taken above their head. There is a callous writing-off of their skills, resources and investment. Human costs are immense.

The President of the Board of Trade likes to suggest that there is no alternative to the closures. He takes the view that if an undertaking does not make a profit, it must go. However, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry proved in its report that options exist. We need a Government who are far-sighted enough to examine the options, act on them and keep the pits open. In the long run, that will save money. Such an approach will also save hardship, suffering and an unnecessary waste and decline in both human and material terms. There are options and we must address them rather than dismiss them as the Government have chosen to do.

Many of the threatened pits do make money; many more could be viable if the Government had a sensible and economical energy policy that looked to the future rather than just to the next balance sheet. If the Government really cared about the communities that will be affected, they would have to invest only a part of those millions in making the coal industry a more viable prospect for the future, thus ensuring the future of the industry, the jobs of its workers, the integrity of the coal communities and the future of all those within them.

The Government had a chance to be positive in the White Paper; instead, they have remained negative. They had a chance to do something, but they chose to do nothing.

9.10 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) mentioned the Hatfield colliery. That leads me directly to one of the two aspects of the White Paper that has disappointed me; I endorse all its other aspects, in the context of the Select Committee's suggestions.

First, I understand that the Hatfield colliery no longer produces coal for the electricity generation market. In my view, the White Paper dismisses the potential of the industrial market in too cavalier a manner. There are huge difficulties, especially in terms of the sulphur control limits on British industry; however, it is clear from the ICI plant in Huddersfield, which uses low-cost technology to clean sulphur, that a breathing space is needed to assist the non-electricity market, just as much as a breathing space is needed in the electricity market, as we have argued both in the White Paper and in the Select Committee.

It is possible that not much tonnage will be involved, but even so a couple of million extra tonnes are important. I suggest to my right hon. Friend that it is worth extending the subsidy provisions beyond the electricity market and into the industrial market, to allow the new technology to come in and to help British Steel to use our coal—poor as it is—not coking, but for a direct injection into blast furnaces, which involves new technology.

My second disappointment relates to a matter that some of my hon. Friends have mentioned. I am disappointed by the nature of the electricity privatisation with respect to the regulator's inability to do other than moan about the profit margins of the two main generators. The Select Committee recommended that the regulator be given powers not to control profit—which is discussed in the White Paper—but to control prices. If we could use the same approach to generators' prices as we have used in other cases, the position would be very different. As the price of coal has significantly fallen, the price of electricity has not begun to match it, but the generators' profits have shot through the roof. Something must be done about that.

It is simply not true that—as the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) suggested—the Government have ignored the main recommendations of the Select Committee. It is also not true that, if the Committee's proposals had been adopted, there would be a huge extra tonnage. He talked of another 36 million tonnes on top of the 40 million, but our report's main table makes it clear that by 1996 the present figure of 65 million will be down to 46 million.

The Government are reducing orimulsion levels and are reducing opencast mining to almost exactly the levels that we recommended in our report. We also need to make different assumptions from those made by the Committee on the French connector and the fact that, for no particular reason, we threw an extra 5 million tonnes into the second year. If those assumptions—for which there was no evidence—are changed, the figures for extra tonnage in the electricity market, which the Select Committee was discussing, if we are realistic, are about 10 to 12 million.

We decided collectively to go for the maximum. We decided that, if everything was stretched, a figure of 16 million tonnes was possible. Opposition Members—including the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), a previous chairman of the Labour party, and the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone—signed up to the basic truism that there is a severe limit to how much extra coal could be taken into the electricity market.

Clearly, the major short-term problem has been imports. We cannot duck the fact that, if British Coal had achieved earlier the levels of productivity improvement that it has had in the past five years, and if it had not had the history of militancy of the 1970s and 1980s, two things would have happened. First, the price would already be lower than that on offer. Therefore, the generators would be more ready to buy coal. Secondly, the generating companies and the regional companies would have been less willing to go for gas had there not been disruption on account of the over-domination of coal in the electricity market. Militancy encouraged the dash for gas, as well as the new turbine technology.

Opposition Members cannot duck two harsh facts. First, the price of gas-generated electricity is cheaper than the price of coal-generated power. That is what the Select Committee says. Secondly, there is a world glut of coal. The oil crisis led to the opening of opencast pits all over the world. They will continue to be opened all over the world, particularly in the southern hemisphere.

The market has always been rigged on behalf of coal. When we privatised the electricity industry, coal was protected for three years. The electricity industry took high tonnages of coal—70 million tonnes to 65 million tonnes—at very high prices: 1·86p per gigajoule. Three years later, it is 1·51p—a tremendous improvement. If that had been the price earlier, there would have been less of an incentive to go for coal imports and for gas.

The price will come down even further. The price of coal imports from all these vast, opencast pits and from eastern Europe—not subsidised and not mined with slave labour, as the Opposition claim, and mostly from the United States of America—is between 1·15p and 1·30p at the power stations. That is the harsh reality which British Coal has to face.

What the Select Committee tried to do, and what the Government have tried to do in the White Paper, was to offer subsidies. The Government are offering huge subsidies so that there will be cheap power. There is headroom in the market. I suggest that the regional electricity companies probably need about 10 per cent. more than they have already signed up for. There is the prospect that during the transitional period, with the subsidies providing a breathing space, British Coal will be able to improve productivity, through improved working practices, to the point at which costs will come down. It will then have a chance to sink or to swim in the open market. Most of the 12 pits will, I believe, swim. Most of them will improve their productivity. There is a market for coal, but we have to be realistic about the scale of that market.

I come from the heart of the south-west Durham coalfields. Too many Opposition Members are disparaging of the Government's efforts to bring new types of jobs to coalfield areas. When five pits closed around my town after the war, Hugh Dalton created new trading estates. When the railway wagon works closed down, new, diversified industries came to the area. A huge responsibility will fall on Lord Walker and the Government to ensure that those mining areas which face pit closures get all the help that they need to create new jobs in the years to come.

9.17 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said that coal is cheap, but for the last 10 years, unfortunately, this country has lurched from economic crisis to economic crisis. The fundamental weakness of the British economy is our balance of payments deficit. Nevertheless, the Government would wipe away the coal industry and make us absolutely dependent upon imported coal, at a cost that the country would be unable to afford.

During the past few months the Secretary of State has been repeatedly interviewed. I heard him refer to a £1 billion subsidy. What he meant was that if the electricity industry had gone on to the open market and bought at the Rotterdam spot price, the lowest possible price that might be available, the price of British coal would have been substantially undercut. What he never took into account was that if we had gone on the world market with £1 billion with which to buy coal, the inevitable effect upon international coal prices would have been substantial.

The main purpose of my brief intervention is to press the Secretary of State a little further regarding his assurance this afternoon about mine safety. He gave me what was almost a categoric assurance about mine safety. I have already heard in this debate three or four hon. Members on the Government Benches demanding changes in statutory regulation and working practice. The Conservatives cannot have it both ways. They cannot deregulate mining safety, and give Opposition Members assurances such as the Secretary of State sought to give this afternoon, and as he has given to some extent in the White Paper.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales will wind up the debate. British Coal has for the past three years sought to abolish the role of the colliery deputy and replace the deputy with an underground supervisor with no statutory responsibility for safety. In the new set-up that some people in Hobart house want to develop, there would be a foreman underground, and if he saw something that was hazardous his job would be to find someone to whom he could eventually report it.

By all means let us see the enormous improvement in productivity maintained, but I trust that the Secretary of State means what he said to the House in giving his assurance this afternoon and will not abolish the statutory responsibility which has been exercised by friends of mine very effectively in my association in contributing to maintaining Britain's mining industry, which is not only highly productive but is the safest mining industry in the world.

9.20 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I want briefly to intervene in this debate because, although my constituency has no specific and direct relation to the mining industry, it has a direct—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not been able to hear the hon. Gentleman because of the noise. Will the House please be much quieter?

Mr. Coombs: The mining industry certainly has an important role to play in the mining equipment industry, and no fewer than 250 jobs in my constituency depend on the industry. I saw these people last week, together with management and union representatives, and they asked me to make one or two points in the debate.

There is no doubt that the mining equipment industry, employing 22,000 people, 250 of them in my constituency, is in the forefront of the world in providing this kind of equipment and has export achievements of which we should be proud. No fewer than £400 million worth of exports every year are achieved by the mining equipment industry out of a total turnover of £900 million.

To give an indication of the effect of this on foreign markets, I point out that no less than half the roof supports and face conveyer equipment in the United States market are made by British mining equipment companies; 80 per cent. of the Mexican market is provided for in that way, together with 80 per cent. of the South African market and 90 per cent. of the Australian market. It means that those markets have been able, with British mining equipment, to reach very high levels of productivity—in Australia in the region of 2 million tonnes per face, against an average of 1 million tonnes per face in the United Kingdom.

The Association of British Mining Equipment Companies and a company in my constituency, Parsons Chain, anticipate and have experienced a loss of jobs in the past few years as a result of the inevitable contraction of the coal industry. Although I think that their projections for further reductions are over-pessimistic, because I believe that the newly privatised area of the coal industry will wish to invest in mining equipment, it is important that the Government give the mining equipment industry the kind of transitional help that they anticipate giving to the mining industry as a whole.

Although I am delighted that, over the five years or the appropriate period, there will be special transitional measures for the mining industry, and although I am pleased that some areas will be given enterprise zone status, I do not necessarily think that that will apply to the mining equipment industry, although certain companies in the industry may be heavily affected. Therefore, I would like to put three points briefly to the Government, particularly given the important effect on mining equipment exports.

First, export credit guarantees ought to be improved, particularly given the fact that, in many of the countries they export to, those areas are particularly important. Mexico, Poland, the Ukraine, China and India are all important.

Secondly, some of the benefits of enterprise zone status, which we award to geographical areas, should be given to mining equipment companies. That would include allowances on rates and capital allowances for five years.

Thirdly, as ABMEC has made clear, there should be some changes in the United Kingdom's coal mining support regulations to improve the market into which mining equipment is sold, thus improving productivity in the mining industry here and abroad and creating a larger market at home for mining equipment.

Those measures would have an important effect on an industry that employs 22,000 people, 250 of them in my constituency at Parsons Chain. I urge the Government to accept them.

9.24 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I am grateful for being called. I had intended——

Mr. Cormack: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Barron: I had intended——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. A point of order has been raised, and I must hear it.

Mr. Cormack: On a brief point of order. Is it usual for hon. Members to be called if they have not been here for the debate?

Mr. Barron: I had intended to speak for only five minutes, and I shall be brief and to the point.

Last October, 2,000 miners in my constituency were put on notice that their jobs would end this week, at the end of March. They have been waiting for the White Paper and probably had the worst Christmas that anyone could have had. They and I believed that the Government had listened to what the country said last October and had gone away to find for British coal a larger market than that which led to the announcement of the closure or mothballing of 31 pits.

After last Thursday's statement, I returned to my constituency and visited Kiverton colliery, my interest in which is shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). That colliery is one of the 12. I had a meeting, which had been pre-arranged on another matter, with the senior management and the workers' representative. Listening to the screams and howls of delight in the House last Thursday, one would have thought that the people at the colliery would be delighted by the announcement, but they were not.

The reason is simple. They know that, without contracts with the electricity generators and without the generators having contracts with regional companies, it means nothing for the Government to say that they will subsidise additional tonnes of coal, especially when there are already 45 million tonnes of coal in stock and the generators have made it plain that they do not want to add to that stock. The people know that and they have been waiting apprehensively, with only one timetable in mind —December of this year when the redundancy payments run out. They know that there will be pressure to leave before December. If they do not leave, it will cost individual families thousands of pounds.

I also visited Maltby colliery, my old colliery, which I left to come to the House in 1983. It is a super pit, which is receiving £200 million of investment under the Labour party "Plan for Coal" to which the Government have added. Having spoken to senior management and workers' representatives there on Friday, I last night faxed a letter to the President of the Board of Trade, asking him if he would make it clear today what last Thursday's announcement meant.

The Government announced last Thursday that they were giving that pit development status. *Coal News*, which was printed overnight, said that retreat mining would be used at the new Parkgate seam. The people at the colliery said that it was likely that between 700 and 800 men would be finished and that production would cease within four weeks. Many of those people moved to Maltby from neighbouring pits in the belief that they had some long-term security in a shrinking industry.

At last Tuesday's consultative meeting, the management showed the work force's representative a slide illustrating that in the previous week 38,000 tonnes of coal had been mined at a cost of £1·1 a gigajoule. Do people realise that if we brought foreign coal into the power stations for which Maltby now produces coal, it would cost between 20 and 25 per cent. more than Maltby's coal?

The plan to develop retreat mining for the new seams is well in hand. The first retreat mine in the new Parkgate seam should start this October. I put it to the Government and to British Coal that that is not only sabotage of a workplace; it is a national disgrace that our taxpayers' money has gone into such a pit with a threat to the jobs of 700 or 800 people. It does not make sense to cease production at that colliery.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will answer at some stage the letter that I faxed to him yesterday and that he will clarify why hundreds of people will go on the dole when they produce not only the cheapest coal in Britain but some of the cheapest deep-mined coal in the world.

9.30 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) speaks with great and personal authority on these matters and I know that his remarks strike a chord with all of us who have mining interests in our constituencies.

It is a matter of personal regret that many of my hon. Friends have been unable to get into the debate this evening. It is a sad reflection on the Government's commitment to open government and to full debate that they have failed to table the motion that would have allowed us to have a full debate and would have allowed all hon. Members to be called. They are also not allowing the amendment tabled by the Select Committee to be voted on. It is a shame that the Government did not allow that amendment.

There is no spectacle more nauseating than politicians who have trumpeted their principles and paraded their consciences suddenly deciding that it is inconvenient to hold those principles any longer. That is precisely what we see today. Last October, a chorus of Tory Members told us how unacceptable it was that the British coal industry should be destroyed. Despite all the bluster and histrionics from the President of the Board of Trade earlier today, the White Paper would destroy our coal industry just as surely as his statement of 19 October would have done. The men and women who defied his logic last autumn have no reason other than the imperative of party politics to change their minds today. However, they have changed their minds and when the House divides tonight, there can be no doubt or uncertainty: a vote for the White Paper is a vote for a short-term political fix.

The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) is apparently still undecided. She has said that she cannot support the White Paper. She referred to herself as an independent-minded Yorkshire woman. It is no good being independent minded if one is not strong willed. Abstention tonight is no option. No credit will be gained tonight by those who settle for unprincipled abstention or for those——

Mrs. Peacock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Much as I should like to give way, time does not allow it. At least the hon. Members for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and for Rochford (Dr. Clark) have implied that they have been bought and that they will stay bought. Their votes will now be secured in the Government Lobby.

Last October, when the President of the Board of Trade described the case for closure, he said that the case "in economic terms" was unanswerable. Nothing in the White Paper shows that his thinking has changed. The basic assumption remains. If the coal industry is to survive, it must live in the rigged market conditions created by the Government. Those rigged market conditions remain. Despite last Thursday's short-lived euphoria in the entourage of the President of the Board of Trade, everyone understands that the closure programme will continue with, at best, 12 pits being given a short-term stay of execution, perhaps for 12 months, but certainly for no more than two years.

John Meadse, the general secretary of the British Association of Colliery Management, has added his authoritative voice, even in the short time that the Government have allowed for evaluation:

"Despite claims that it has saved 12 of the 31 collieries previously scheduled for closure, no meaningful action has been taken by the Government to obtain markets for their output. At present, British coal is frozen out of more than half the elecricity generation market, whatever its cost or price. The truth is that a few pits may continue for the next 12-18 months; but beyond that, the future is bleak."

The whole House knows and understands that the crisis now facing our coal industry is of the Government's own creation. Last Thursday, the President of the Board of Trade said of his White Paper:

"I have done all that I reasonably could, consistent with economic realities and legal constraints"—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 1231.]

Those economic realities and legal constraints are a direct consequence of the way in which the Government's own policies rigged the markets at the time of the electricity privatisation. They cannot now disclaim responsibility for the job losses and social and economic dislocation that will follow the implementation of what is proposed in the White Paper as surely as night follows day. Why will not they acknowledge the central fact that the energy market as currently organised does not allow fair and free competition?

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Get back to the bar.

The Select Committee on Trade and Industry, in its excellent report—I add my congratulations to those already given to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn)—made it perfectly clear that that is the central question to be addressed. What the Government have done—and support for the White Paper will endorse their approach—is to offer no way forward.

Mrs. Peacock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: Time prevents me.

Mrs. Peacock: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You are here to protect the interests of Back Benchers. I seek your advice. If an hon. Member speaks about another hon. Member, is it not usual for him to give way to that hon. Member?

Madam Speaker: It is usual for the hon. Member who is speaking to give way, but that is entirely a matter for him; it is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way!

Mr. Davies: I hope that, given the hooligan behaviour that we are witnessing tonight, you, Madam Speaker, will consider your responsibility to protect the interests of Front Benchers as well as Back Benchers.

Madam Speaker: Order. I need no reminding by any hon. Member of my responsibilities: understand that.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine *rose*——

Mr. Davies: One of my responsibilities is to reply to the debate. There were some 20 speeches and I hope to reply to many of the points that have been raised. It clearly would not be possible to give way to all those to whom I wish to refer. Nevertheless, I shall give way to the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and has been extremely rude about her performance. I should have thought that he could at least do her the courtesy of allowing her to make a response. Will the hon. Gentleman give way to my hon. Friend?

Mr. Davies: I will offer the hon. Lady a deal. If she has the courage of her convictions and votes with us tonight, I will discuss the matter with her in the No Lobby.

Mrs. Peacock *rose*——

Mr. Davies: The Government have admitted that there is a problem, but they offer no solutions. The energy market is riddled with inconsistencies. The dash for gas continues with competing generators building gas-fired stations despite the fact that the electricity that they produce is more expensive.

Gas is a more limited resource and it will be exhausted in less than a lifetime. As the Select Committee pointed out, it is also more expensive. We already have the coal-fired capacity to meet our needs. Government subsidies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Order."]

Madam Speaker: Order. I need no lessons from any part of the House.

Mr. Davies: The Government subsidise nuclear fuel to sell electricity which is not only uneconomic, but environmentally unsound. How can that possibly be justified when the principal argument for pit closures is that coal is uneconomic and has to compete on the open market? What can be the sense in closing viable British pits because they cannot compete with illegally subsidised French electricity via the interconnector?

The British Association of Colliery Management hinted at the answer when it claimed:

"For both miners and management the hallmark of the Government's lack of courage is its abject failure to address these problems."

The Select Committee specifically referred to that matter, but we will still allow that overpriced electricity to displace 6·5 million tonnes of British coal.

Major environmental concerns exist about orimulsion, heavy fuel oil and the extension of opencast mining. However, because we do not have a coherent energy policy, they will continue while the colliery closure programme goes ahead. None of those central questions has been faced.

Of course, if one denies that the Government have a role and the need for a national energy policy, one must ignore those questions. The President says that the market must decide. Secure energy supply cannot be left to the short-term vagaries of the markets. Governments do intervene and plan when they choose so to do. It is a matter of political will. This Government lack the political will to give us a national energy policy. The cost of that failure will be the colliery closure programme——

Mr. Churchill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: In the Lobby.

The Trade and Industry Select Committee estimates a financial cost of nearly £2 billion over two years while the Employment Select Committee concluded that

"the financial cost of resulting unemployment should have been a significant part of the equation when deciding the future of the pits".

However, it was not and nor was the annual £1·3 billion cost of our non-oil energy trade deficit.

On 21 October, the Secretary of State for Wales told us that

"we must look to the future."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 524.]

Under this policy, we have a future without a £2 billion industry, with a national asset irrevocably lost, dependent on expensive fuel imports, with higher costs to industry and the domestic consumer and, above all, with communities with large-scale unemployment.

After all the sacrifices, commitments and collective effort of British miners, they and their industry, their families and communities are now to be betrayed. As a result of their efforts, British miners have made British Coal the most efficient and cost-effective coal industry in Europe. Figures from the Trade and Industry Select Committee show just how well they have performed. Between 1985 and 1990, productivity increased by nearly 88 per cent. in British pits. That is nearly twice as high as Australia which has 45 per cent. Canada managed 32 per cent. and South Africa had 29 per cent., with 2 per cent. for the rest of Europe.

The 1992 Conservative party manifesto promised:

"We will support the efforts of British Coal and its work force to improve the industry's performance."

That manifesto promise is betrayed by this White Paper. It is betrayed like the men, the families and the communities who will pay the price in direct and personal terms for the Government's failures. I do not think that they can comprehend the savagery of the social and economic costs of the proposed closures.

In Taff Merthyr on the edge of my constituency and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), nearly 500 men will be put out of work. The loss of their wages alone will cost the local economy more than £8 million. Independent estimates put total job losses at 1,400, once indirect job losses have been taken into account—*[Interruption.]* This is injury time. British Coal estimates that a further £4 million will be lost to local contractors.

At the last count, male unemployment in the Merthyr and Rhymney travel-to-work area was more than 23 per cent. South Tyneside, which is facing the loss of Westoe colliery, has more than 28 per cent. male unemployment. Doncaster, which is facing the loss of Bentley and Hatfield, Markham Main and Rossington, has male unemployment of more than 18 per cent. Mansfield, which is facing the loss of Bilsthorpe, Clipstone, Rufford and Shirebrook, has nearly 18 per cent. male unemployment.

I have no doubt that the Secretary of State for Wales will tell us about all the jobs which he has created. He will tell us about his predecessor, now Lord Walker, and his valleys initiative. During that initiative, we lost 22,000 jobs in Wales and only 2,000 jobs were created. Throughout the length and breadth of Britain, people know the value of Tory promises.

We have a Government who were elected on deceit. Ministers are more concerned about their public image than about the national interest. The Select Committee on Employment urged that the true national cost should be taken fully into account. The Government have not done that and they do not deserve the support of the House for the White Paper.

9.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): That was a disgraceful and discourteous speech. Towards the end of his speech the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) asked for injury time. The injury time that he should have given was to give way to my hon. Friends the Members for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), whom he abused, and for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). In this debate, both my hon. Friends expressed serious concern and reservations about import issues, yet the hon. Gentleman chose in an arrogant way not to give way and not to give them an opportunity to intervene. All I can say for the Labour party is that the hon. Gentleman should have seen the stony faces on his Front Bench, because I am sure that the majority of hon. Members deprecated the way in which he conducted his speech.

I have been present, as has the hon. Gentleman, for all the 29 speeches in the debate, just as I was present for all the 28 speeches in the previous debate on this subject. Many years ago I was one of those who were instrumental in setting up the departmental Select Committee system. This debate has been a great testimony to the wisdom of that Conservative innovation.

We have heard several speeches from members of the Select Committee. Although I reckon that the Chairman, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), was perhaps guided a little too far by party politics, the Select Committee has been a model for the way in which Select Committees should respond to situations of this nature.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When is the Secretary of State going to stop waffling about the subject and start answering——

Madam Speaker: Order. Sit down. These interruptions waste valuable time. That is not a point of order for the Chair and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Hunt: I continue my tribute to the Select Committee.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) was right in saying that Select Committees do not expect the whole House to accept every recommendation

[Mr. Hunt]

in the reports that they present to the House. As he said, the 39 recommendations are not 39 articles of faith. They have been a helpful background to the debate.

Mr. Cabom: I fully accept what the Secretary of State says, but would it not have been right for the House to have the opportunity to vote on the amendment which several members of the Select Committee tabled? If he genuinely believes that Select Committees have a role to play in our parliamentary system, the House ought to have the opportunity at least to vote on the 39 recommendations.

Mr. Hunt: It was perfectly open to the Labour party to table an amendment in those terms. Instead it tabled an amendment which negatived several of the recommendations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) had it right. The Government have produced a White Paper after carefully considering many of the recommendations. The White Paper sought to respond to the two central questions asked by the Select Committee: first, can there be a market for coal over and above the base contracts with the electricity generation industry; secondly, can assistance be given to British Coal for only a transitional period to make a larger proportion of its output competitive? The Chairman of the Select Committee will agree that those were the two central questions posed by the Committee.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford said, the Government have said five things: first, British pits should have the opportunity to sell as much coal as the market will take, with extra tonnage subsidised to world prices; secondly, no pit will be closed without first being offered a chance to find a future in the private sector; thirdly, there will be no changes to the gas and nuclear electricity sectors; fourthly, coal will remain the main fuel for electricity generation; fifthly, there will be a regeneration package for mining areas. That has been increased to £200 million.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Agreement has to be made on the potential subsidies with the European Economic Community under article 95 of the treaty of Rome. Will agreement be reached or not? At the end of 1993 the current agreements run out and negotiations will have to take place. The House has not yet discussed the possibility that the European Community will not accept what is in the White Paper.

Mr. Hunt: I want to give way to hon. Members, so I shall endeavour to write to every hon. Member—there were 29 speeches—who raised a point which I do not have time to cover.

To answer the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), proposals have been submitted to the European Commission, preliminary discussions have taken place, and we are optimistic that the Commission will grant approval.

Mr. Redmond: Can the Minister explain precisely what is meant by mothballing? Rossington pit in my constituency will close if it is mothballed because the faces must be operated to keep them active.

Mr. Hunt: In my experience, the hon. Member is a fair gentleman and I hope that he will acknowledge that I have been underground in many more pits than most hon. Members and I know what mothballing means; it means care and maintenance to keep the capacity until the market expands to allow the pit to resume coaling. It is a well-known expression, and I am happy to assure the hon. Gentleman that that is what it means.

The White Paper gives an opportunity for the coal industry to expand its markets—in response to the Select Committee, which asked for that opportunity to be provided—and a subsidy of hundreds of millions of pounds to ensure that it can do so.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) wriggled and wiggled and avoided answering an important question: does the Labour Front Bench support the strike action called for by Arthur Scargill on Friday? My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) pointed out that a strike will damage the coal industry, and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said during the debate, "Thank God they are going to strike on Friday." What is the answer from the Labour party?

I am stunned by the complacency on the Opposition Benches. Opposition Members still think that they can criticise the Government without suggesting any realistic proposals of their own. They have become so used to being in opposition that they do not know what taking decisions means.

The poor hon. Member for Livingston said that France had a Government who are standing up for the French people—he meant the socialist Government. The message from France is that they have got rid of socialism.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Secretary of State may have heard my contribution, in which I reminded the House that, unlike the Labour party, we submitted evidence to the Government review and we have published an alternative White Paper. After tonight, if people outside this House support the miners on Friday or any other day, does the Secretary of State accept that they will do so because they perceive that whereas the Government artificially protect other energy sectors, such as electricity, gas and nuclear, the coal industry does not receive the same support?

Mr. Hunt: First, coal has received a subsidy and support of £18,000 million since 1979. Secondly, would the hon. Gentleman have a word with his hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who is sitting beside him, and ask him to explain why he signed the Select Committee amendment as well as a totally opposite amendment tabled by the Liberal party?

The story of this debate is that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has eaten the Labour party for breakfast, for tea, for lunch and for dinner. I reckon that he will get up tomorrow and do it all over again.

In Wales, the post-coal revolution has taken place. We have provided new jobs for mining communities, but the message of the White Paper is that there is life for coal in prosperous times and recession. Industry is always changing. It must change with the times and circumstances to survive. I believe that the White Paper is giving the industry a chance, an opportunity and a head start in winning for itself a similar position in the future.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 295, Noes 320.

Division No. 214] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Begga, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 319, Noes 297.

Division No. 215] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, [illegible] *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Mi[illegible] *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Worthington, Tony

Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the White Paper 'The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review' (Cm 2235).

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

Sheep and Goat Farming

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4307/93, relating to sheep and goat farming; and supports the Government's objective of ensuring a successful transition to a fully harmonised European Community sheepmeat regime which is in the interests of United Kingdom producers and consumers, whilst recognising the difficulties faced by certain Community producers in the 1992 marketing year.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

Cohesion Fund

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4436/93, relating to the establishment of a Cohesion Fund; and agrees that the draft regulation proposing a cohesion fund instrument should be adopted before 1st April 1993, in accordance with the conclusions of the Lisbon and Edinburgh European Councils.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 66.

Division No. 216] **[10.29 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn

Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Barnes, Harry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Cummings, John
Davidson, Ian
Donohoe, Brian H.
Eagle, Ms Angela
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Galloway, George
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hume, John
Jessel, Toby
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marlow, Tony
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
O'Hara, Edward
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Purchase, Ken
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Trimble, David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wilkinson, John
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Bill Michie

Question accordingly agreed to.

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Ordered,

That Mr. Nigel Forman be added to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Royal Assent

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1993.
2. Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993.
3. Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993.
4. Alliance and Leicester (Girobank) Act 1993.
5. British Railways Act 1993.

PETITIONS

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

10.42 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The petition contains the names of 12,000 people of Swansea and south-west Wales. It has been compiled by trade unionists, by traders and by the general citizenry of the area. Effectively, it has been signed by those who are concerned about the threat to 3,000-plus jobs at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency at Morriston in my constituency. The petition is fully supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), by my hon. Friends the Members for Gower (Mr. Wardell) and for Neath (Mr. Hain), by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams).

The petition states that, if the Government proceed, as was threatened in a report prepared by the chief executive of the agency last October, to put the work now carried out at the agency out to contract as part of their privatisation programme, that will inevitably lead to the loss of those much-valued jobs in an area of high unemployment, will devastate employment prospects in the city and the area in the longer term, and will seriously reduce the quality of service now provided by the agency to the motor trade and to the public.

The petition ends with the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners Pray that any proposals to contractorise the work of the Agency be withdrawn or rejected.

To lie upon the Table.

Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education

10.45 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I have the honour to present a petition signed by more than 7,000 people on behalf of the Oxstalls Action Group in Gloucester and the Park Area Residents Campaign in Cheltenham. The petition

sheweth

That the imminent sale by the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, for commercial and housing redevelopment, of the Oxtalls campus, its only site in Gloucester, will materially reduce educational services in the City, and their availability for parts of the county. The College's policy of concentrating its students and resources in Cheltenham will be to the great detriment of both towns, especially in the residential neighbourhoods most immediately affected. A unique conservation area in Cheltenham is already experiencing problems for that reason and is threatened by their intensification through building development, while the destruction of a prominent park-like site will be a serious loss for Gloucester.

The petition has the support of the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). The prayer contained in it reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House initiate an immediate and independent appraisal of the Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education's financial and educational strategy to determine the justification for the demolition of accessible, sound and purpose-built premises (1958 onwards) with residential accommodation for 240 students, and require the College to reconsider and amend its plans in the light of current government expectations that the new universities and colleges of higher education will deliver courses as near as possible to the increasing numbers of day students in their regions.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Security Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.46 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Let me say at once that I am campaigning for effective parliamentary scrutiny of the security services—mainly MI5—and am not questioning the need for such organisations. I accept entirely the necessity for a security service, and that would remain my position even if we were not plagued by the curse of terrorism. To the best of my knowledge, all democracies have some such service, for the same reason as this country does—to protect the security and safety of the state and its citizens.

As we know, the Security Service—that is to say, MI5—has recently been placed on a statutory footing, and I was involved in the proceedings in Committee on the Security Service Act 1989. The Security Service Commissioner makes an annual report to Parliament, to which I am sure the Minister will refer in his reply. I have looked at two of the commissioner's reports, and he states in both that neither he nor the Security Service Tribunal has yet found in favour of a complainant.

The Home Secretary has stated that a Bill will be introduced this Session to place the Secret Intelligence Service—MI6—which is answerable to the Foreign Secretary, on to a statutory basis. However, the Government continue to resist strongly all proposals for making the security services subject to parliamentary scrutiny—hence my Adjournment debate.

Since the matter was last debated in the Chamber, MI5 has taken on a wider remit. As we know, that organisation—instead of the police—now has the lead role in intelligence gathering and related matters regarding the Provisional IRA and, I assume, other terrorist groups. The ending of the cold war was bound to change the role of the security services both in Britain and in other democracies in western Europe.

The other change that has occurred since the subject was last debated in the Chamber is the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which, as the Minister is aware, recommended that MI5 should be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. I welcome that, and I hope that many hon. Members welcome it as well, although it is not the Government's position, as we shall learn shortly, that the recommendations should be implemented.

The Select Committee refers to the practice in other countries, where the security services have some accountability to their national Parliaments. They include Canada, Australia, Germany and the United States. Although the Home Secretary gave the impression, in so many words, in his evidence to the Home Affairs Committee that the efficiency of those services had been harmed—although he did not perhaps use that word—I do not suppose that the Governments of the countries to which I have just referred take that view. I imagine that they are perfectly satisfied that the security services are carrying out their rightful functions, but have a degree of parliamentary scrutiny that is lacking in this country.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): My hon. Friend referred to the comments of the Home Secretary when he gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee. In his comments, the Home Secretary said that it was difficult to distinguish between policy and operational control. Will my hon. Friend comment on the position of the police authority for London? At the moment, the Home Secretary is the police authority and he organises policy control, but operational control lies in the hands of the commissioner and the police. That is an exact analogy with the kind of scrutiny proposed by the Select Committee.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend has made a valid point. I studied the evidence to the Select Committee and its conclusions very carefully. The emphasis is that a Committee, be it the Home Affairs Select Committee or any other Select Committee, would not examine the day-to-day operations. No one would expect such a Committee to do that. However, the overall policy matters and financial aspects would rightly be subject to question.

I do not want to go over the ground of previous debates on this subject. However, it is necessary to remind the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who is standing in for the Home Secretary tonight, of the serious concern that has been expressed over various happenings in recent years.

The response of the Minister tonight, or of other Ministers, may be that everything that I am going to mention in passing occurred before MI5 was placed on a statutory basis. That is undoubtedly the case, but it does not alter the fact that these incidents occurred, and not so many years ago.

If a quarter of what Mr. Wright said was true—much more may have been true, for all I know—that shows that, instead of combating subversion, senior officials of MI5 were actually engaged in it against an elected Government who did not meet with their approval. That was unforgivable. As I have said, that organisation has a job of work to do to combat subversion, but all the stories seem to confirm, to a certain extent, much of what Mr. Wright said. Senior officials, although we do not know how many or at what level except that they were certainly senior officials, were involved in what can only be described as subversive action against a Government whom they did not happen to like politically.

There were also investigations by the F branches—F1, F2, F3 and sub-branches of MI5—and allegations by former MI5 employees such as Cathy Massiter. As I have said before, that person who worked in MI5 is to be congratulated. No prosecution has been brought against her, and rightly so. No one has really disputed what she said. She worked in MI5 and concluded that some of the activities were not in any way necessary, but were against the spirit of what should be the work of the security services.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Cathy Massiter's allegations about telephone tapping were investigated by the independent judge and rejected? While recognising that specific decisions by the judge, does he recognise that there is a failure in the 1989 Act—that is, the inability of the tribunal or the commissioner to investigate complaints which originate before December 1989?

Mr. Winnick: I shall come to the first point in a moment. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said—he was part of the controversy which occurred during the passage of

the legislation—anything which happened before 1989 cannot be investigated. The commissioner also makes that point in both of his reports.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) and Patricia Hewitt were subject to investigation —this is not disputed—and they took their case to the European Court. At the time, they were the leading paid officials of the National Council for Civil Liberties. Have any hon. Members suggested that my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham is some sort of subversive? What nonsense! What lunacy could have occurred that she should be the subject of such investigation, together with Patricia Hewitt, whose name is well known in the House?

Cathy Massiter said:

"Anyone who was on the Executive of the National Council for Civil Liberties, who worked for the organisation, was an active member to the degree of being, say, a branch secretary of the organisation, would be placed on permanent record and routine inquiries were instituted to identify such people and police inquiries were sought."

Can that be justified? It is nonsense. That is why there is understandable concern about some of the work done in the past against perfectly bona fide organisations and people who are no more subversive than any hon. Members in the House.

Recently—to bring the matter up to date—the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress complained that his communications were being intercepted by the intelligence authorities. I understand that Campbell Christie has made a complaint to the commissioner of the Security Service. The complaint was not upheld, so the press said, and he is taking his case to the European Court. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that compensation will be paid by the Government in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham and of Patricia Hewitt.

Parliamentary scrutiny in itself will not prevent abuses. No one has suggested anything of the sort. If MI5 was subject to some accountability other than simply to the Home Secretary, the tribunal and the commissioner, there would at least be the feeling that their activities would need to be justified. It is interesting to note that, in paragraph 13 of his second report, the commissioner, Lord Justice Stuart-Smith, said:

"There can be no doubt that the very existence of the Tribunal as a body empowered to investigate complaints provides the Security Service with a strong additional incentive to ensure that its procedures are designed to eliminate the chance of a complaint being found justified."

Effectively, he is saying that his existence and that of his tribunal are some sort of deterrent against abuses of the sort which I have mentioned. How much more a deterrent would there be if the Security Service knew that a parliamentary committee existed which monitored its activities but not its day-to-day operations?

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why scrutiny by a Committee of the House is likely to be more effective than scrutiny by the independent tribunal?

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer. Effectively, to say that the House and its Select Committee —be it the Select Committee on Home Affairs or any other Select Committee—would be no more effective than a commissioner is to say that parliamentary scrutiny does not add up to much. If one takes all the subjects which are being investigated by Select Committees, one might as well use the hon. Gentleman's argument and say, "If there was a commissioner or a tribunal investigating social services or the Treasury, it would be no less effective than a Select Committee". The hon. Gentleman knows full well the answer to that question.

It is rather important to have the parliamentary scrutiny which exists in other democracies. Why should Britain be an exception? There have been various rumours, true or otherwise—who knows?—that the Government will concede at some stage in the near future, perhaps when the next measure comes along, that there should be parliamentary scrutiny, but that there will be no question of the Home Affairs Select Committee or any other being given the remit. A small committee of perhaps four or five members will be set up consisting entirely of Privy Councillors. I have seen reports somewhere that they would report to the Cabinet Office. That would not be acceptable. If the Government insist, they will get their majority, but the controversy will continue.

The idea that Members of Parliament who do not happen to be Privy Councillors are not trustworthy is sheer nonsense. I would find it surprising if such a measure was accepted on a free vote. The Home Affairs Select Committee discussed that option and rightly rejected it.

I conclude by quoting the final paragraph of the Home Affairs Select Committee report:

"The Home Secretary raised the bogey of a secret service that was not secret. The Committee wants no such thing. The work done by the Security Service is delicate, and much of it is necessarily of the highest confidentiality. We do not believe that there is any general right or need to know what the service does on a day to day basis. But we do believe that establishing a form of parliamentary scrutiny of the service would meet an important public interest and help to protect against any possible future abuse of power."

That is certainly my view. I have held it for a long time. I am pleased that, after all these years, the Home Affairs Select Committee, albeit with a Conservative majority, has made the point powerfully.

Although I know that the Minister has no authority —I am not being patronising—to change policy which has been laid down by the Home Secretary, I hope that the campaign will continue. I hope that, however long it takes —I hope that it will not take too long—we will establish that degree of democratic control and parliamentary accountability of the Security Service which is practised elsewhere and is much needed in Britain.

11.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on obtaining this Adjournment debate and on raising the important question of the accountability of the Security Service. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has strong views on the need for oversight of the work of the Security Service. The Government entirely agree with him. In a parliamentary democracy, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the agency which is given responsibility for protecting national security is subject to proper oversight in carrying out its necessarily secret work. The Government differ with the hon. Gentleman in his analysis of the reasons why such oversight is needed, as I shall seek to develop in a moment.

The hon. Gentleman anticipated what I might or might not say. I shall deal with some of the subjects that he raised, but I hope that he will understand that I cannot

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

comment on individual cases, as he perhaps rightly anticipated. Nevertheless. I commend him on the interest that he has consistently maintained in this important subject.

As the House will recall, the nature and extent of the arrangements which were required for ensuring that the Security Service was properly accountable for its work were fully debated in the House a few years ago during the passage of the Security Service Bill. At that time, the House spent a full day in Committee debating the nature of the arrangements which needed to be put in place to secure the right balance.

The Opposition, no doubt including the hon. Gentleman, argued then that it would be right to place the Security Service under the scrutiny of a Select Committee of the House in the same way as ordinary Government Departments. Other hon. Members argued that, because the task of overseeing the work of the Security Service would not simply be akin to that performed by Select Committees in scrutinising other Whitehall Departments, a specially constructed Security Service review committee was needed. That suggestion, I suspect, drew heavily on the experience of the Canadians, as the hon. Gentleman said a few moments ago.

The Government took the view that, even though such a system might well suit conditions in Canada, this House needed to decide on a system of oversight which was right for this country and which reflected the responsibilities of the Security Service, the threats to our citizens from which it is the duty of the Security Service to provide protection, and the duties of Ministers in the House.

After a full debate, Parliament agreed with the view of the Government that the difficulties of principle and practice in the way of establishing an effective mechanism of direct parliamentary oversight were such that the better course was to rest on the approach which had previously been followed, by which the Security Service was accountable to Ministers for its work and Ministers were in turn accountable to Parliament. That is not to say that the Security Service Act 1989 denies any role to Parliament.

In passing the 1989 Act, Parliament set out the framework within which the Security Service operates, established the functions of the service and provided for safeguards against any abuse, whether by members of the service or by Ministers. I remind the House that Parliament also receives the annual report made to the Prime Minister by the commissioner appointed under the Act. In general, however, the House agreed in 1989 that ministerial accountability for the work of the Security Service was the right model for this country.

More recently, as the hon. Member for Walsall, North has reminded us, the question of the accountability of the service has been raised in a report by the Home Affairs Select Committee. I notice the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) in her place, and I know that she is a member of that Committee. In preparing its report, the Select Committee once again carefully reviewed all the arguments about accountability. It acknowledged the significant moves which have been made in recent years towards removing unnecessary secrecy surrounding the work of the Security Service.

The passage of the Security Service Act was an important step in that direction, and has been followed by: the announcement of the appointment of Mrs. Stella Rimington as director-general of the service; the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on 8 May last year concerning the transfer to the service of the lead responsibility for intelligence-gathering in Great Britain in respect of Irish Republican terrorism; and the acknowledgement that Thames house, on the Embankment, was to be the service's new headquarters. I am pleased to acknowledge the Select Committee's recognition of those very positive steps.

The Select Committee also recognised, quite rightly, that, whatever arrangements may be put in place for ensuring the proper accountability of the service, they must be such as to avoid damaging in any way the effectiveness of the service, or putting lives unnecessarily at risk—the very point that the hon. Gentleman made early in his speech. However, the Select Committee went on to conclude that the work of the Security Service should be suject to parliamentary oversight in just the same way as any other aspect of the working of government, and that the Home Affairs Select Committee itself, perhaps unsurprisingly, should undertake that task.

It would not be right for me now to anticipate what the Government will say in their response to the Select Committee's report. To do so would be discourteous to the Select Committee, or to the other members of it who are not in their places. But this brief debate tonight will be of assistance to the Government as we consider the terms of our response to the report, which we hope to publish shortly after Easter.

There will, of course, be a further opportunity to debate all this when the Bill which the Government have promised to bring forward in due course, to place the Secret Intelligence Service and Government communications headquarters on a statutory basis, is presented to the House. That Bill will, as the Government have already said, be introduced in the lifetime of the present Parliament. The hon. Gentleman said that he expected that to be in the current Session, and I think that the Select Committee understood the same thing, but the Government have not said that. The Bill will be introduced as soon as the necessary parliamentary time can be made available, but I cannot promise when that will be, other than that it will be during this Parliament.

Often, it is the implicit theme in the claims made by those who criticise the Security Service that it is not subject to any form of effective oversight of the way in which it carries out its work. I have already referred to the system of safeguards established under the Security Service Act 1989. Similar safeguards exist in respect of other intrusive methods of investigation under the Interception of Communications Act 1985. Between them, those Acts create an effective system of judicial oversight of the work of the service, as partially described by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Allason: In regard to the safeguards within the 1989 Act, while I welcome the existence of a commissioner and people's ability to make complaints, can my hon. Friend tell the House why it is apparently undesirable to disclose to the public or the House how many complaints have been received annually by the commissioner?

Mr. Wardle: That is information that should be imparted not directly but to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is accountable to the House.

Under the Security Service Act 1989 and the Interception of Communications Act 1985 there is a commissioner with power to review the use made by the service of the most intrusive methods of investigation, and a tribunal with powers to investigate or refer to the commissioner complaints made by members of the public who believe that their rights have been infringed. Both commissioners and tribunals take their responsibilities very seriously, and I know that the Security Service takes equally seriously the need to ensure that the commissioners and tribunals have total freedom of access to the records of the service and its staff so that they may satisfy themselves that the work of the service has properly been carried out.

Furthermore, as Minister with authority over the Security Service, as given to him by the 1989 Act, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is accountable to Parliament for the work of the service. Of course, in matters relating to national security, the Government have a particular duty to safeguard information which, if divulged, could help those who are ill disposed towards this country. Thus, while Parliament may wish to question the Home Secretary on this as in other areas, there are bound to be limits to what he can safely say.

This limitation was recognised by the Home Affairs Select Committee in its conclusion that nothing should be done to damage the effectiveness of the Security Service and that operational matters affecting the service would not be revealed publicly, however great the interest there may be in seeing these affairs discussed openly in the House and in the media. There is a distinction to be drawn between what would be of interest to the public and what is in the public interest, but the fact that essential considerations of secrecy may place limitations on what can be said on the Floor of the House about the service and its work does not in any way alter the principle of ministerial accountability to Parliament.

Nevertheless, the Government recognise that there is genuine interest in the House in the question whether the existing approach to oversight, as reflected in the terms of the 1989 Act and which I have just outlined, is the right one. Against the background of the Government's commitment to greater openness, there is a need for us to consider again whether there may be a case for looking afresh at those arrangements.

As I have said, I will not anticipate the Government's response to the Select Committee's recommendations, but I want to make it clear that the Government have no sympathy whatever with the argument—not made by the Home Affairs Committee, and certainly not by the hon. Member for Walsall, North, but often made by critics of the service—that a system involving more direct and intrusive oversight of the service is needed in order to prevent it from acting in a fundamentally undemocratic way and infringing the civil liberties of individuals to no good purpose.

No effective security service can ever routinely deny the many wild and inaccurate stories which are almost bound to circulate in the media from time to time about what it is alleged to have done. If it, or Ministers speaking for it, were to deny such stories on some occasions or outline cases on any occasion on which it was judged not right to issue such a denial, the very fact of silence would be taken by some as confirming the truth of the allegation. Even where subsequent events prove that the allegation was ill founded, what would remain in the minds of the public would be the allegation, not the fact that it had turned out to be unfounded.

Mr. Winnick: I do not disagree with much that the Minister has said about day-to-day operation, but in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) and Patricia Hewitt, surely the Government conceded the point by what they said before the European Court and by the compensation paid. I did ask the Minister whether he would confirm that.

Mr. Wardle: I said at the outset that I would not comment on individual cases, and I believe that the hon. Gentleman heard that. The hon. Gentleman mentioned "Spycatcher", or at least Peter Wright. Many people recall the allegation contained in "Spycatcher", to which the hon. Gentleman alluded, that the Security Service had engaged in a plot against the Labour Government of the day. Mr. Wright subsequently retracted that allegation on television, but that received far less publicity than his initial claims.

The idea that, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary put it during the debates on the Security Service Act, the Security Service is rather akin to an untamed and possibly dangerous animal which has to be placed in a cage with a bright light shone upon it, and that a keeper has to be employed to go into the cage and announce to the world at every stage what the animal is doing, is quite simply not a view of the Security Service that the Government accept. Nor is it a view that we would be willing to have play any significant part in influencing the shape of any oversight mechanism in respect of the service.

If the House decides, in due course, that it is right to establish a different framework for the oversight of the service from that which has existed up till now, it is vital that the change should be made for the right reasons. Any change would have to strike the right balance. On the one hand, there is the need to ensure that the work of the service, with its undoubted potential for infringing on the civil liberties of individual people, should be carried out in a way which ensures that the service is properly accountable for all that it does; on the other, there is the need to ensure that the vital work which the service carries out in the national interest should not be rendered more difficult or impossible by the public disclosure of its operations or other matters which must remain secret if the service itself is to remain effective. There is always a balance to be struck between those two competing aspects.

It will not surprise the hon. Member for Walsall, North that I cannot say tonight whether the Government will, in due course, decide that, with the passage of time since 1989, it is appropriate to propose a change to the current arrangements. But we do recognise that this is a matter of quite proper concern to many members of the public and to hon. Members. I can assure the House that whatever view we reach on this most important matter will not be reached without the most careful consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes past Eleven o'clock

House of Commons

Tuesday 30 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PWLLHELI HARBOUR (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

DAWAT-E-HADIYAH (ENGLAND) BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Parenthood

2. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support he is giving to education for parenthood.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): It is vital that parents set out for their children the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and teach them the differences between right and wrong. If parents do not give a lead, then children will not respect them. If there is no respect, then there is no authority. And too many children are entering school with too little respect for authority. Schools must help to reinforce those standards, but teachers alone cannot do the job of parents.

The basic values of decency, self-discipline and respect for others are some of the most important things that we can instill in our children and pass on to them. We must teach children to be responsible parents, and the law provides for that to be done in schools under the Education Reform Act 1988. Today's school children are tomorrow's parents, so that task is vital.

Mr. Bowis: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, with which I wholly agree. Does he accept, however, that as a result of social changes one in four of 16-year-olds has seen the break-up of the parental home and increasing numbers of children in my constituency never have a father in the home, so there is no paternal example to follow? In seeking ways of educating for parenthood through the school system, will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind? Otherwise, those future parents will have had no example to follow. They desperately need the support of society as a whole.

Mr. Patten: Of course I shall reflect carefully on what my hon. Friend, with his characteristic sympathy for people in difficulties, has said, but it is also right that parents should always try to fulfil their responsibilities, however difficult the home circumstances. I sometimes think that the greater use of more school-home contracts would help in that regard.

Nursery Education

3. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made of the number of nursery places which would be provided by local education authorities if each one spent at least at the level provided for in the Government's financial settlement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): The Government make no planning breakdown of the overall amount allowed for education within the local government finance settlement. It is for authorities and schools to decide how that might best be allocated between the various services, including nursery provision, which authorities provide under discretionary powers.

Mr. Callaghan: I thank the Minister for that reply. May I point out, however, that in addition to the huge mailbag that I have already sent to the Department from parents in Rochdale borough who are concerned about the lack of provision for education and the national lack of nursery places, this morning I received a further 53 such letters from concerned parents? In the light of those worries, will the Minister introduce statutory provision for nursery education nationally so as to allay parents' fears?

Mr. Forth: No, I can give no such undertaking. In this country we have a system of voluntary provision, which is left to the discretion of elected and accountable education authorities. About 90 per cent. of children receive pre-school education in a variety of different ways. We believe that that is by far the best way to deliver the provision. It is for parents, both as parents and as electors, to decide locally whether they are satisfied with that provision. I believe that we have made good progress in that regard during the 1980s, and that we shall continue to do so in the 1990s.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the Select Committee report in the previous Parliament on under-five provision, and especially to its comments on the appropriateness of the curriculum? It is good that 90 per cent. of our children are in some form of pre-school education. However, the Select Committee showed clearly the importance of having a curriculum particularly suited to their needs. May I direct my hon. Friend's attention to that report and ask him to take it on board in any advice that he gives to local authorities?

Mr. Forth: We always pay the closest possible attention to Select Committee reports, as I hope goes without saying. My hon. Friend is trying to take us somewhat further than we should like to go at this stage, bearing in mind that we have one of the earliest ages for mandatory universal school provision and, therefore, for curriculum. The pre-five provision is diverse and should remain so.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister confirm that parents who live in a Labour county council area have

three times more chance of getting a nursery place for their children than those who live in a Conservative council area? What does the Minister intend to do about Conservative councils' appalling record on nursery education? Will the Minister agree that every three and four-year-old should have the right to the best start in education, which means being able to have the advantage of nursery education?

Mr. Forth: No, I propose to do nothing of the kind, as local education authorities are responsible to the electorate and make their own decisions about these matters. I do not share the hon. Lady's apparent obsession with mandatory state taxpayer-provided pre-school provision. It is a matter of diversity of provision and of different parents having different provision of the kind that they prefer. If the hon. Lady does not understand that now, she never will.

Dyslexic Children

5. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision he has made for the teaching of dyslexic children in grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: Where a pupil's special educational needs, including dyslexia, require a statement, provision is the responsibility of the local education authority. Where a pupil does not require a statement, primary responsibility for provision rests with the school and its governors, whether the school is grant maintained or not.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my hon. Friend agree that although dyslexia is an overused term, it is nevertheless a specific learning difficulty which should be addressed in a specific way? Does he also agree that the belief held by some schools and some local education authorities that is simply a general disability to be treated like any other disability condemns many children of above average ability to having their lives blighted because their full potential is never realised?

Mr. Forth: I find it almost incredible that anyone should have the attitude that my hon. Friend has described. If a child has a specific educational need, the local education authority must by law make an individual assessment of that need and must then make proper provision. My hon. Friend will know that among the many important advances in special educational provision under the Education Bill, which is currently in another place, is a code of practice which will introduce uniformity and standardisation in this important matter. That should go a long way towards eliminating any residue of the thinking that my hon. Friend describes. Any parents who are dissatisfied with the way in which their children are being treated by the local education authority have the right, which I hope that they will exercise, to appeal to the Secretary of State for a review.

Mr. Trimble: May I assure the Minister that the problem described by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) referred is not unique and that there is considerable reluctance within many education authorities to recognise dyslexia where it exists? I am glad to hear that there is to be a code of practice. Will the Minister take steps to ensure that the code is brought vigorously to the attention of local authorities so that people who have this problem, which does exist, will have a remedy?

Mr. Forth: Indeed, the code of practice is to be statutory. It is contained in the Education Bill and it will apply to the territories covered by that Bill. I cannot stray on to the territory represented by the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that the best practices which are now developing and the recognition of various types of special educational need will now be brought forward and clarified by the Bill and I am sure that they will be reflected, if they are not already, in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Mathematics

6. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what efforts are being made to raise standards in mathematics.

Mr. Patten: Under the national curriculum, mathematics is for the first time compulsory for all pupils aged five to 16. With regular assessment and testing, that will do more than anything to raise the competence of young people in mathematics. As recently as Tuesday, I met representatives of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications to discuss those important issues.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that the lack of basic skills in numeracy and literacy is estimated to be costing British industry approximately £5 billion per year? Does that not demonstrate the importance of a national curriculum and of regular testing? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there has been an improvement in mathematic results for seven-year-olds which will eventually have a beneficial knock-on effect for British industry and this country?

Mr. Patten: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her question. I agree that both the national curriculum and testing are bringing about a steady improvement among school children in mathematics, particularly the use of numbers. We need to do more, however; that is why I welcome the fact that the new general national vocational qualifications will do a great deal to help children in perhaps the bottom 30 per cent. of the ability range to perform better, because that is what British industry and business need in terms of training our work force for the future.

Ms Estelle Morris: Does the Minister share my concern about the chronic underachievement of girls in mathematics, with almost three times as many boys taking mathematics A-level? Since the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate four years ago, what action has his Department taken to overcome those problems and what new research has he commissioned?

Mr. Patten: In the past four years, the national curriculum and the new testing regime have been introduced and mathematics continues to be very popular indeed; it is the second most popular A-level subject. Teaching methods for girls as well as for boys are being improved, although I should like work using computers to be balanced by as much use of tables from an early age.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: My right hon. Friend will be aware that specialist subjects such as mathematics, physics and chemistry have often been taught in schools by teachers who were underqualified in those subjects. Can he confirm that, as a result of the Government's initiative and desire to raise standards in our schools, that trend is

lessening and we are getting better qualified mathematicians and scientists into our schools to help to raise standards among our young people?

Mr. Patten: I can indeed confirm exactly that. The number of underqualified mathematics teachers is diminishing fast and is currently about 10 per cent. of those teaching in secondary schools. I am also pleased to be able to report to the House that in 1992, the last year for which I have figures available, there was a shortage of 73 mathematics teachers out of the total of about 400,000. That is a good picture for the future of maths.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Secretary of State accept that it is not simply a question of raising standards, but that maths must be made user-friendly? There is a joy in numbers, but in the last decade the climate against science and technology, which were put across as bad and damaging subjects, led to an acute shortage of entrants for technical degrees in some universities. It is crucial to get the message across as early as possible in schools that those subjects are not bad and damaging. Humanity needs mathematics as much as maths needs the humanities.

Mr. Patten: I do not want to alarm the hon. Gentleman, but I agree entirely with all that he has said.

A-S Level

7. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consider promoting A-S level GCE examinations at sixth form final examinations.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): A-S examinations are making a significant and worthwhile contribution to broadening post-16 studies. The Government have been encouraging schools, colleges and students to use them as they think best. I look to higher education and employers to take full account of the A-S achievements of young people.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware that despite the best efforts of Staffordshire county council, which has decided to knife all travel for students in rural areas to sixth-form colleges and high schools in my constituency, twice as many young people are studying at higher education institutions as in 1979? Does my hon. Friend agree that although A-levels may be the gold standard, they force students to specialise far too early? Would it not be better if universities were encouraged to accept A-S levels, which have a much broader educational approach, as the first means of entry?

Mr. Boswell: From what my hon. Friend says, it is clear that Staffordshire county council is not going to win a gold standard for anything in education. On the substantial part of my hon. Friend's question about A-S levels, we believe that it is unwise to challenge a standard that is in place by seeking to diminish it. We seek to offer alternative approaches, which may or may not be taken up, as a matter of choice. Already more than 50,000 A-S levels are taken each year, including, last year, my own daughter's. Alongside that, as an alternative, we have at last tackled the problem of vocational qualifications by providing clear, comprehensive and comprehensible alternatives through the national vocational qualifications and general national vocational qualifications. Pupils and future employers can decide on the most appropriate route to take.

Selection (Penrith)

8. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has held with Cumbria county council on the introduction of selection in education in Penrith.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The decision to restore selection in Penrith is an absolute outrage. Does the Minister not realise that people of all political persuasions in Penrith reject that decision, as they did last year when consultation took place in the community? If Ministers are impaled on the nonsense of the policy, can we have a ballot of the people of Penrith and the surrounding communities so that they have the opportunity of rejecting the Government's nonsense?

Mr. Forth: There seems to be a certain desperation in what the hon. Gentleman says. I do not know what he is worried about. It seems that our response to what the school governors wanted and our fulfilling of a need in education for a diversity of provision causes Opposition Members upset and discouragement. I am intrigued by the suggestion that we should start running things by local referendum—I do not know whether that is now Labour party policy. I believe that the combination of governor decisions in schools and the election of governors and of local education authorities which are fully accountable creates sufficient democracy. I do not believe that we should go down the route suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that we must have equality of opportunity in education in Penrith and everywhere else? If we are to educate children according to their age, aptitude and ability—as we must, and as the Education Act 1944 rightly laid down—there must be self-selection by children, and schools must have the right to select according to subject and other disciplines. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the only way to give every child the maximum opportunity to fulfil his or her potential?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend, who is extremely knowledgeable and experienced in such matters, points us in the right direction. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that it is his desire to respond to what local schools say about how they want to serve their local communities and to advance towards the policies that their governors choose.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: People do not want it. The Tories do not want it.

Mr. Forth: The case cited is a good example and one that I believe will be followed by many schools up and down the country *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will examine each case on its merits and make a calm and rational educational judgment—*[Interruption.]*—as Opposition Members seem incapable of doing.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister think again, as the Penrith decision is turning the clock back in a ridiculous way? The reintroduction of a crude and fallible selection at 11 will deny education opportunities to many children. That decision is clearly wrong on educational grounds. Does the Minister not realise that comprehensive education has produced good results in educational terms, as evidenced by last year's GCSE examinations? How on earth does dividing children at 11 years of age fit in with what the Prime Minister says about creating a classless society?

Mr. Forth: Many people believe that a certain amount of turning the clock back might not be a bad thing in some respects. I can only say to the hon. Lady that not only can a decision like this not be reversed, but this decision certainly should not be reversed. I believe that it reflects the ability of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to respond to local desires and demands in the best interests of the education of children up and down the country. *[Interruption.]* If the Opposition will take the time to reflect more calmly on the matter, they will see that there is not much to get excited about.

Seven-year-olds (Testing)

9. **Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the results of the tests for seven-year-olds.

Mr. Patten: Last December I published the national and local results of seven-year-olds in the 1992 tests. Those results fully supported the importance of the tests, showing some worrying variations in performance between local education authorities and continuing weaknesses in key areas of the curriculum: for example, the tests revealed that just under a quarter of seven-year-olds still could not read independently by that age. Much more needs to be done.

Mr. Pickles: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, which will be read with great interest by teachers in my constituency. Given that the children who sat the test for seven-year-olds are likely to be the beneficiaries in full of our education reforms, and given that a recent report showed that the quality of both teaching and learning were improved by the tests, does my right hon. Friend agree that children go through the education system only once and that valuable lessons can be learnt by those who seek to boycott the tests at 14? Will my right hon. Friend give a commitment that he will not leave these children at the mercy of those who want to ruin their education and that he will continue with our education reforms so that every child gets a chance?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend has carried with him his robust turn of phrase and accurate analysis of a situation in his journey from Bradford to becoming a born-again southerner in Brentwood and Ongar.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I can give him every undertaking for which he asks. The evidence produced by the independent inspectorate this week clearly shows that, year on year, the tests have produced improvements in learning and teacher assessment. Best of all, they have improved the expectations of individual teachers about what children can achieve.

Mr. Skinner: Would it not be a good idea for the whole Cabinet to have another test? Is it not a cheek to be talking about testing seven-year-old kids when the Cabinet got the poll tax and council tax figures wrong, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was £15 billion out on the public sector borrowing requirement and £10 billion out on the balance of payments and chucked £10 billion away on Black Wednesday, and the right hon. Gentleman—who is supposed to speak for education—is educated beyond his intelligence?

Mr. Patten: All I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that the voters of Bolsover clearly got their electoral tests wrong time after time.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend encourage the use of the seven-year-olds' test results to report to parents in terms of value added in future years, which will be much more useful than giving an absolute level of result?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The tests will make it possible to judge the improvement or not of a group of children at each age level as they progress from seven to 11 to 14 to 16. It is the best sort of value added measurement that the tests will reveal over the years.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will not the Secretary of State admit, to his own shame, that the poor results to which he referred to for seven-year-olds were produced after 14 years of Tory government? The Office for Standards in Education report to which his hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) referred, and to which the Secretary of State referred in his reply to him, says that "the benefits and costs are finely balanced. There are some clearly discernible signs that the impact of 'teaching to the test' and the complexities of the assessment required could lead to a distortion between teaching, learning and assessment."
Will the Secretary of State heed that warning and undertake a review of this tortuous system of tests and assessment, consult teachers and then introduce reforms along the lines of those that were introduced by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland—reforms which have already happily been accepted by teachers, parents and pupils in Scotland?

Mr. Patten: Each year's tests are preparations for the next year's tests. Each year's tests are refined on the basis of experience of the tests of the previous year. The pilot tests have conclusively shown, both at age seven and at age 14, that there is an unacceptably long tail of children—perhaps up to 30 per cent.—who do not come out of school with the standards of literacy that we should expect. That is justification for the testing regime, let alone the very clear way in which the inspectorate has pointed to these tests as raising standards overall and the expectations of teachers about what children should achieve. Above all else, I believe that we need a more competitive education system and that expectations should be very much greater than they have been in the past.

Grant-maintained Schools

10. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of children who will be in grant-maintained schools by the end of the current year.

Mr. Patten: Current estimates suggest that more than 625,000 children will be educated in self-governing grant-maintained schools by 1 January 1994.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. Friend for that extremely helpful reply. Does he agree that that figure of 625,000 children underlines, as nothing else could, just how successful these schools are and how popular they are with the parents who vote them into existence? Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning Labour Members who wish to abolish these schools, which provide parents with additional choice?

Mr. Patten: Already by this afternoon, about 15 per cent. of all our secondary schools have voted to go grant maintained. That number will increase rapidly. Indeed, the number of grant-maintained schools will increase so rapidly that, despite the pledges of Labour Front-Bench Members, by the time of the general election in 1996 or 1997 the movement to grant-maintained schools will be absolutely irreversible.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Will the Secretary of State join my in congratulating the parents and governors of Hinchingbrooke school in Huntingdon, which is in the Prime Minister's constituency, on having recently voted by an overwhelming majority to stay with the local education authority?

Mr. Patten: Each school must make up its own mind whether it wishes to be self governing or a local education authority controlled school. Month after month, year after year, every time that schools hold a ballot, eight out of 10 resoundingly vote yes.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the teachers, parents and many hundreds of pupils in Friesland school, the first school in my constituency to go grant maintained and whose proposals he has just approved? Does he agree that the widely publicised inspectors' report on grant-maintained schools shows not only that they work well but that self government is the best future for every school in the country?

Mr. Patten: I have two things to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight). First, I congratulate the school very warmly indeed, in particular because I know what the electors in that school had to go through, in terms of the vicious campaigning against the school becoming grant maintained. Secondly, the inspectors' report, published at 2.30 this afternoon, points clearly to the overwhelming advantages of self-governing, grant-maintained status.

Mr. Steinberg: Does the Secretary of State agree that he and his colleagues told us when grant-maintained status was introduced that it would allow schools to escape from bad local education authorities? Can he tell us how many grant-maintained schools there are in Tory authorities and how many there are in Labour authorities?

Mr. Patten: There have been ballots in nine out of 10 local education authorities. Very soon, there will have been ballots in every education authority.

Sir Anthony Grant: On the question of Hinchingbrooke school, in the Prime Minister's constituency, is my right hon. Friend aware that the headmaster, as is typical of a Liberal Democrat activist, has chopped and changed his views so much that it is hardly any wonder that the parents are totally bemused?

Mr. Patten: I did not know that there were many Liberal Democrat activists left in Cambridgeshire. I have nothing to say on any individual ballot, other than that it reflects the individual wishes of the parents who have taken part in that ballot. I believe that it is critical, however, that parents have in front of them a clear set of information about the pros and cons of becoming grant maintained. It is equally important that no local education authority or local education officer is involved in campaigning with misinformation in this way.

Second-tier Schools

13. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) on 23 June, *Official Report*, column 123, what progress he has made in eliminating second-tier schools.

Mr. Forth: The national curriculum will ensure that all pupils receive a coherent education, relevant to their needs and set in a clear overall framework. Regular assessment will ensure that parents and teachers know what progress pupils are making. Every school maintained wholly or partly by public funds will be inspected at least once every four years by independent teams led by an inspector registered by Ofsted. Education associations can intervene where these inspections reveal a school to be failing. Taken together, these measures should ensure that standards rise steadily in every school throughout the country.

Dr. Jones: Can the Minister explain to the House exactly what the Secretary of State meant when he used the term "second-tier schools" last June, and why they exist after 14 years of Tory Government, 17 pieces of education legislation and 400 additional powers for the Secretary of State under the Education Reform Act 1988? Could it have anything to do with the fact that the Secretary of State seemed to recognise belatedly yesterday when he equated under-achievement with low spending? Will he, therefore, congratulate Birmingham City Council on a 9 per cent. increase in its education budget and also make representations to make up the shortfall in the standard spending assessment of capital financing, so that Birmingham can further increase its spending? Will he intervene to stop the cuts in education spending that are occurring throughout the country?

Mr. Forth: I hope that the hon. Lady is not attempting to justify and defend Birmingham's record in regard to education spending. That would take a much longer question than even she has just managed to ask. What my right hon. Friend meant, I believe, was this: the provision by local education authorities throughout the country has been, to say the least, somewhat patchy and rather variable. All the measures that we are taking—the curriculum, standard testing, independent inspection by Ofsted and the safety net of education associations—are designed to ensure that no school will be allowed to fail its pupils and no local education authority will be allowed to fail its parents and pupils as, regrettably, as has been the case in the past. That is what my right hon. Friend meant and that is what our Bill is designed to do.

Pupil Numbers (Kent)

14. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children currently are educated in local education authority and grant-maintained grammar schools in the county of Kent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992, the latest figures available, nearly 26,000 pupils attended grammar schools in Kent. Of these, 7,000 attended schools which are now self-governing state schools.

Mr. Dunn: Is it not a fact that the people of Kent enjoy grammar schools and a range and variety of secondary schools that are second to none because of the existence of the Conservative-controlled county council and the election of a Conservative Government in 1979? What advice, therefore, would my hon. Friend offer the people of Kent on 6 May in order that they may keep their grammar schools?

Mr. Forth: I believe that the people of Kent will wish to consider the contrast between the quality and diversity of choice that are available to them under the present educational regime in Kent and the drab uniformity that would be offered by the Opposition. I believe that, having considered that, they will have no doubt in coming to the conclusion that a Conservative vote in the elections in May will be the only way to guarantee the continuance of the excellent record that Kent has had so far.

Mr. Bryan Davies: In those Tory-controlled authorities where schools select their pupils, what happens to parental choice?

Mr. Forth: Parental choice, or "preference" as it is expressed in the statute, is of course at the core of what we believe is the way forward in education. The support of parents up and down the land, to which my right hon. Friend referred a moment ago, in voting consistently for more grant-maintained schools, demonstrates the increasing number expressing themselves to be satisfied with our policies.

Technical Education

15. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress is being made in the promotion of technical education.

Mr. Patten: The launch of the new and independent further education sector on 1 April is a clear demonstration of the high priority we are giving to developing the technical and other skills the country needs. We are funding a record 25 per cent. increase in the number of students entering further education over the next three years, and shall see higher and more relevant achievement—not least through the new general national vocational qualifications.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that technical education is one of the key factors for investment by industry in Britain? Will he welcome the results that have just come out for 1990, showing that 20 per cent. of those entering degree courses in engineering already have vocational qualifications? Does he agree that we will build on that with the NVQ system, and that that will be good for jobs, for investment in Britain and, above all, good for this country?

Mr. Patten: It is important that universities and other higher education institutions treat vocational qualifications seriously, because we should have been doing that for a very long time. I also applaud the excellent work of further education colleges, some teaching to degree level, not least the excellent North Hertfordshire college.

Books

16. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average sum per pupil spent on the purchase of books in primary and in secondary schools during 1992.

Mr. Boswell: In 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, the average expenditure on books and equipment in LEA-maintained schools in England was £41 per nursery and primary pupil and £80 per secondary pupil.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister realise that the costs of books and papers for teachers dealing with the national curriculum and testing in our primary schools now greatly exceed the sums available for the purchase of books for the children? Does the Minister not consider it absurd that more literature—if that is the right word—is reaching primary schools for the teachers' reading than for the pupils?

Mr. Boswell: The Government are aware of the costs of books and equipment. That is one reason why we provide excellent resources for the delivery of the national curriculum. It is also a matter of fact that we have increased spending throughout the country on books and equipment by some 31 per cent. in real terms during our period in office. May I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has a word with the Rotherham LEA, because it appears from the figures I have quoted that in that relevant year its spending was only half the national average? That may be a matter of some concern, although it is a decision for the LEA.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind that grant-maintained schools have more scope to spend money on priorities such as books, will my hon. Friend congratulate Councillor Heeley, a Labour councillor in Amber Valley, who recently, as chairman of governors, proved right the old adage that it is never too late to learn by supporting the school's successful bid to go grant maintained? Does my hon. Friend think that this presages a change in Labour policy, bearing in mind that the Labour party has already done U-turns on devolved budgets, the core curriculum and testing?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. We are always pleased to accept conversions, even at a late hour. The body of evidence building up in favour of the attractions of grant-maintained schools and their capacity to deliver and resource education is growing. I am glad that even members of the Labour party are beginning to accept it.

Mr. Don Foster: In view of the answer that the Minister has just given, will he make it clear to the House whether he believes that what the hon. Member for Amber Valley

(Mr. Oppenheim) said—that schools that opt for grant-maintained status are automatically given more money for more books—is true or false?

Mr. Boswell: The fact is that they receive no additional resources for their current expenditure and the fact that they are able to make better use of them is a tribute to them and to their governors.

Testing

17. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on progress made in developing and implementing testing in schools.

Mr. Patten: Assessment and testing are integral to the national curriculum and are needed to raise standards. This year sees the third year of assessment of seven-year-olds which is already serving to improve teaching and learning, as the inspectorate has already pointed out. I expect the tests for 14-year-olds, starting this year, and the tests for 11-year-olds, starting next year, to have the same effects.

Mr. Nicholson: My right hon. Friend will know, through oral questions before Christmas and through certain conversations since, of my concern about the administrative burdens being caused by certain tests. Is he aware that there has been a welcome in Somerset schools for his decision not to publish the results of this year's tests and also for certain of the changes he has made in the tests? Will he do his best to ensure consistency and ease of administration in these tests?

Mr. Patten: I welcome any welcome from Somerset and I thank my hon. Friend for that. One of the things that the tests show is that there is, alas, still too much variation in assessment of quality across the country between Somerset and other counties. That is something we need to look at over the next year.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Secretary of State realise that there is grave anxiety among organisations that care for children with disabilities that the Government's concentration on tests and on league tables will lead to over-concentration of school energies on high flyers, to the detriment of children with special needs? What will he do to ensure that that does not happen?

Mr. Patten: I do not think that that is the case. I have been to two special schools in as many weeks and I have talked to teachers there who say, on the one hand, that they wish to help those children who have severe learning difficulties but that, on the other hand, they wish the tests to be used to try to stretch children with special educational needs to the maximum of their ability. That is right. That is what we all have to do in classrooms all over the land in every sort of school—to stretch the children as much as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the British people are becoming increasingly fed up with the unlawful activities—*[Interruption.]*—with the unlawful activities of French farmers and French fishermen? Does he further agree with me that their actions are detrimental to the interests of the United Kingdom, its people and our trade?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is true that the recent action by French farmers and fishermen is totally unacceptable. I am sure that the whole House will have seen that the French ambassador made clear yesterday beyond doubt his condemnation of their activity in the clearest possible terms. I very much welcome that. My hon. Friend may also know that the French authorities have undertaken to provide safe passage for any consignments of which we notify them. We are pursuing the recent fisheries-related incidents actively with the French authorities and we look to them to restore order, to bring the perpetrators to book and to guarantee unfettered access.

Mr. John Smith: I am sure that the whole House will wish to congratulate the British film industry on its further success in winning five Oscars last night. Does the Prime Minister not agree that our film industry could be even more successful if it received the same backing and support from Government as do its competitors in other countries?

The Prime Minister: The success of the British film industry in the private sector owes a great deal to the fact that it is in the private sector, and to the individual skills of writers, actors and directors.

Mr. Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that the number of films made in Britain has plummeted from 50 to 12, and that the minimal help offered to the industry in last year's budget does not in any way make up for the abolition of capital allowances, the Eady levy or the malign effect of the Broadcasting Act 1990? Does the Prime Minister not understand that if real encouragement were given to the industry, we could increase jobs and overseas earnings?

The Prime Minister: Once again, the right hon. and learned Gentleman equates real encouragement with the spending in subsidy of taxpayers' money without giving any indication of whether there would be corresponding reductions elsewhere—an increase in borrowing and perhaps higher interest rates or higher taxation. When he asks for more expenditure, he owes it to the public to say from where the money is coming.

Mr. Smith: But does the Prime Minister not understand that we have in this country a fabulous pool of talent in our film industry—*[Interruption.]* This is a serious subject——

Madam Speaker: Order. These interruptions are a total waste of the time of the House. In addition, they are an abuse of the House. The House will now come to order.

Mr. Smith: It is remarkable that Conservative Members find it a matter of humour when we are talking about jobs, British films and overseas earnings. Does the Prime Minister not understand that a modest investment in our industry would give us a huge return in employment and vital overseas earnings?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman on one point, which is that our arts generally—I include the film industry in that—are among the best, if not the best, in the world. That has repeatedly been shown to be the case. I hope that, in the light of that, he and his hon. Friends will support the National Lottery Etc. Bill, which provides greater support for the arts than ever before.

Mr. Coe: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the dramatic reduction, announced only a couple of days ago, in the number of cot deaths in this country, of about 60 per cent. in the first nine months of this year? Does he agree that that is testimony to sensitively targeted health education, "The Health of the Nation" strategy and the Anne Diamond campaign?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the key reasons for that. It is a very remarkable achievement and I am delighted about it, as everybody else will be. I wholeheartedly congratulate both Anne Diamond and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the measures they have taken.

Q2. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Now that the Prime Minister is himself a year and a day closer to collecting his old age pension, he may be interested to know that the Post Office is at the moment considering plans which could remove entitlement by pensioners to collect their pension payments by way of DSS giro over post office counters. Is he aware that post offices derive 30 or 40 per cent. of their total income from those transactions and that any alternative method of payment—perhaps by way of banks or building societies—could eventually lead to a charge being made for the payment of that service? Will the Prime Minister summon the Ministers involved in those discussions, irrespective of what other damage or problems may flow from the privatisation of the Post Office, and make it clear to them and the House that the payment of pensions by means of automated credit transfer will not be made compulsory?

The Prime Minister: I am well aware of the sensitivity of the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, and it is one of many matters that will need to be considered in the future.

Mr. Harris: The whole House will have welcomed my right hon. Friend's remarks regarding the dispute with France. Will he go further and make it perfectly clear to his opposite number, the French Prime Minister, that the Royal Navy will not stand idly by if there is any attempt to repeat the disgraceful incidents of the weekend by French fishermen?

The Prime Minister: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), we have made perfectly clear to the French ambassador our very strong condemnation of recent incidents. He has made it equally clear that such action is not acceptable to the French Government, and we have made it clear to the French Government that we look to them to deal with those incidents.

Q3. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Byers: As council tax demands are being sent out, will the Prime Minister explain to the House why, under the system of financing local authorities, his constituency of Huntingdon, according to the Government, suffers greater poverty than Blyth Valley? Is he aware that, even under that unfair system of local government finance, the average council tax in Labour authorities will be £14 less than in Conservative authorities? Does the Prime Minister agree that the message to council tax payers is clear: Labour councils cost you less and serve you better?

The Prime Minister: I award the hon. Gentleman the prize for the cheekiest question this year. Let me tell him that the 10 highest taxes in band C are Harlow—Labour; Newcastle—Labour; Greenwich—Labour; Manchester—Labour; Haringey—Labour; Liverpool—Labour; Hendon—Labour; North Tyneside—Labour; Salford—Labour; and Derwentshire—Labour, all at band C. The lowest are Wellingborough—Conservative; Westminster—Conservative; Isle of Scilly—Independent; City of London—Independent; Hambleton—Conservative; Hinckley and Bosworth—Conservative; Huntingdonshire—Conservative; Basingstoke—Conservative; South Cambs—Independent, and Fareham—Conservative.

Mr. Trotter: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Tyneside is very grateful to him for his decision to go ahead with the order for the helicopter carrier, the largest and most important ship to be ordered for the Royal Navy in years, which will give Swan Hunter the chance to win four years' work? Will he visit the yard while the ship is being built, as we are confident that our team will win the order?

The Prime Minister: I certainly must not pre-judge the outcome of the tender, but I agree with my hon. Friend that confirmation of the helicopter carrier in the defence programme is very good news indeed for the British shipbuilding industry. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has argued long and hard for this particular vessel to be in the programme. I am sure that there will be very keen competition for the order. I assure my hon. Friend that I will follow its progress with the same interest that he will.

Q4. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Prime Minister aware of the remark made by one of his Ministers in another place who said——

Hon. Members: Reading.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he should not quote.

Mr. Sheerman: She said that although she is responsible for 804 public appointments, she cannot remember knowingly appointing a Labour supporter. Given the sad state in which this country finds itself, is it not time that the Prime Minister started appointing people on the basis of competence and ability—*[Interruption.]*—on the basis of competence and ability, rather than according to the corrupt political patronage for which his Conservative Government are notorious?

The Prime Minister: We most certainly do appoint on competence, and there are people of all political persuasions who hold public appointments and have been appointed throughout the period of this Government since 1979. My hon. Friend whom the hon. Gentleman quotes used the word "knowingly" to indicate the fact that the political persuasion is not relevant to the competence and the appointment.

Hartley

Q5. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to pay an official visit to Hartley.

The Prime Minister: I am making plans for a series of visits to all parts of the country and I visited my hon. Friend's constituency last Friday.

Mr. Dunn: Is the Prime Minister aware that the people of Hartley are fully behind the Government's plans to reform the National Union of Students and that they are interested in knowing his views on the role of trade unions in our modern political society?

The Prime Minister: Trade unions do have an important and mature role in our society. Their role ought to be to look after the interests of their members—not to align themselves particularly with a political party, not to throw votes behind the leadership of that party, not to provide the finance for that party, and not to sponsor every Front-Bench Member of the Opposition.

Engagements

Q6. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Wright: Does the Prime Minister recall that he told the House some time ago that a referendum on the Maastricht treaty would be unnecessary as the country had decided that matter in the general election? Does he accept that that was a foolish statement—that, whatever was decided in the general election, it was not the Maastricht treaty? Does he understand that it is both foolish and dangerous to tell people that they have decided something when they have had no part in the decision?

The Prime Minister: The strict answer to the hon. Gentleman's earlier question is no. The hon. Gentleman knows very well why I think that it is right that this House should decide the fate of the Maastricht treaty in all its aspects. That is the basis of parliamentary democracy, and, as I understand it, it is the position of his own Front Bench.

Q7. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Townsend: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the support, in all quarters of the House, for the United Kingdom's early return to UNESCO, which has been greatly reformed in recent years? Bearing in mind the fact that President Clinton is about to take the United States back into that organisation, would it not be prudent for my right hon. Friend to secure this country's return beforehand?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend and others of my hon. Friends made me well aware of the strength of their feelings on this matter when they came to see me recently. As I indicated to them, we are keeping the matter under review, and no final decisions have been taken. I will certainly bear my hon. Friend's concern in mind when we make our decisions.

British Rail (Financial Objectives)

3.31 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you have had a request from the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement on the new financial objectives for British Rail. As you will know, this important matter has in the past been the subject of statements to the House so that hon. Members on both sides might question the Minister concerned. On this occasion, there is to be a 23 per cent. cut in grants to British Rail, as well as the lowest level of investment since nationalisation in 1948, yet the statement of new objectives is to be buried in the written reply to a planted question from the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff). Has there been any request for a statement? Can you, Madam Speaker, protect the interests of the House?

Madam Speaker: As I have informed the House—I do so on regular occasions—whether a Minister makes an announcement by way of a statement at the Dispatch Box or by means of a written reply is up to the Minister himself. The direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that I have not had any request for a ministerial statement today.

Transplantation of Human Organs

3.33 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to implement the recommendations of the Committee chaired by the late Sir Hector Maclennan and the report on Medical Research and Health of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology relating to the transplant of human organs.

The purpose of this Bill is to allow hospitals to take the organs of anyone, other than people who have contracted out during their lifetime, through the central computer at Bristol. If legislation along these lines were achieved, we should avoid very difficult personal decisions being made at the point of maximum grief. These decisions have to be taken quickly as organs begin to deteriorate within half an hour.

This goes back a long way. In the 1970s I attempted on eight occasions to introduce similar legislation. In those days it was supported by Miss Mervyn Pike, who was the chairman of the Conservative health committee, by Col. Sir Malcolm Stoddart-Scott, who was a doctor deeply involved in the subject, and by the late and not forgotten Dr. Anthony Trafford, a distinguished Conservative Member of Parliament and renal transplant surgeon.

I have among the sponsors today some of those in the House who know most about these matters, including my hon. Friends the Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), a professor of neuro-surgery, for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), who is a doctor, and other colleagues who have taken a deep interest in these delicate matters.

In the summer of 1969 I did a survey of 1,000 families in the then West Lothian constituency on the ground that people would talk more willingly to a known Member of Parliament than to pollsters. Of those surveyed, 364 would have gone for opting-out; 312 said yes to opting-out but preferred the voluntary or card system to be given a proper chance first, there were 208 "don't knows", and the balance of 116 were against, including three state registered nurses who wanted resources for simple operations such as hernias before transplant surgery.

Even at that time there was a good deal of support for the opting-out system which, with qualifications, has been recommended by the distinguished surgeon who was the father of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), one of the sponsors of my Bill. Even though it had the personal support of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the legislation which I proposed then was objected to chiefly by Sir Keith Joseph, as he then was, and his Department.

I do not in any way belittle the seriousness of those who oppose the Bill because, as the Minister knows, I went to the Department of Health and he courteously gave me an interview and explained that a number of surgeons, held in high regard by the Department, were unhappy about the element of compulsion. So it does the case that I put forward no service to pretend that there is not some serious opposition.

On the other hand, there is strong and powerful medical support. What has prompted me to try the ten-minute Bill procedure is the report of the Government's own committee, the Advisory Council on Science and Technology, entitled "A Report on Medical Research and Health" published with the imprimatur of the Cabinet Office, which says:

"Organ transplantation:

Through progress in surgical techniques, reinforced by the development of effective immunosuppressants and antibiotics, effective transplantation of organs (kidney, hearts, liver, cornea) and cells (bone marrow) over the past forty years has been a major achievement of 20th century medicine.

Kidney transportation is now the treatment of choice for end-stage renal failure, and bone marrow transplantation has become the preferred treatment for some forms of leukaemia and marrow aplasia.

Apart from bone marrow transplantation, cellular transplantation is a relatively new concept but is likely to have an important role in the future as growth factors and new knowledge of cellular biology allow specialised cells to be grown and manipulated in vitro by genetic modification."

Then we come to the crunch of the report:

"Although the technologies are available, the full benefits to patients which can be achieved are not being realised because of our shortage of organs for transplantation. While the number of transplants in the first half of 1992 significantly exceeded that in the same period of 1991, less than one fifth of possible recipients received kidney transplants. Since past measures to increase organ supply have failed, radical actions need to be considered."

Dr. Peter Doyle, chairman of the council's medical research and health committee, is quoted in *The Independent* as saying that in 1991 not one single kidney transplant was achieved through the card system. A lot of us carry our cards, but in the whole year it apparently achieved precisely nothing.

So to the recommendation of the Government's own report:

"We recommend therefore that the health departments enhance the number of organs available and investigate mechanisms to introduce an opt-out system similar to those operating in Belgium, France and Austria."

"Action",

it says:

"Health Departments to introduce an opt-out system for organ donation."

This ten-minute Bill does not encapsulate anything that is out of the way or in any way maverick. It simply seeks to face up to what we all know, from our constituencies, are very sad cases of desperate need for some kind of matching tissue, tissue which far too often goes up in the incinerator of the crematorium. It is for these reasons—humane reasons and reasons of medicine—that I hope not only that the House will give a hearing to the Bill but, far more important, because we know that ten-minute Bills are kite-flyers, that some kind of action will be taken within the next 12 months to deal with an acute situation in which there is an ever greater shortage—it increased by 7 per cent. last year—of matching human organs.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tam Dalyell, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr. Sam Galbraith, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. Max Madden, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. Alfred Morris and Ms Dawn Primarolo.

Transplantation of Human Organs

Mr. Tam Dalyell accordingly presented a Bill to implement the recommendations of the Committee chaired by the late Sir Hector Maclennan and the report on Medical Research and Health of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology relating to the transplant of human organs: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 30 April, and to be printed. [Bill 173.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 25 March]

[Mr. Michael Morris *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

Amendment proposed [25 March]: No. 227, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 238'.—*[Mr. Richard Shepherd]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

3.43 pm

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I remind the Committee that we are also considering the following: Amendment No. 231, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 228'.

Amendment No. 232, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 228a'.

Amendment No. 30, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'and IV' and insert 'IV and V.'.

Amendment (a) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'(except Article J.2 of Title V)'.

Amendment (b) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'(except Article J.4 of Title V)'.

Amendment (c) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.1 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (d) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.3 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (e) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.5 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (f) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.6 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (g) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.7 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (h) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.8 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (i) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.9 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (j) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.10 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment (k) to amendment No. 30, in line 1, at end add

'but not Article J.11 in Title V thereof'.

Amendment No. 224, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'and IV' and insert 'IV and V'.

New clause 5—*Foreign, security and defence policy*—

'The Secretary of State shall lay before Parliament a report of any case in which decisions taken, or proposed to be taken, by the Union in the course of implementing a common foreign, security and defence policy (pursuant to Article B in Title I of the Maastricht Treaty) are in his opinion inimical to the best interests of the United Kingdom.'.

[The Chairman]

I have two short statements to make.

First, I promised the Committee some time ago that I would announce in good time any changes that I made to my provisional—and I emphasise the word "provisional" —selection of amendments. Right hon. and hon. Members will see that I have selected for debate new clause 75 on transferred powers (commencement). As a corollary, I do not propose to select amendment No. 27 for debate or for separate Division.

Secondly, may I draw the Committee's attention to the omission of some eight columns from the *Official Report* of our previous sitting, at column 1103? I understand that the omission was due to an oversight at the printing stage. The missing columns have been printed as a corrigendum in the *Hansard* report of proceedings on Monday 29 March, following column 138. For the convenience of hon. Members who may be collating the reports of the Committee's proceedings, the corrigendum will also be reprinted as a separate supplement, which will be available in the Vote Office tomorrow morning.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am obliged to you for making available your provisional selection of amendments. This is the first occasion on which we have had to find out whether our amendments have been selected, so may I draw your attention to amendment No. 458, tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), by some other hon. Friends and by myself? The amendment relates to sub-paragraph 2——

The Chairman: Page number?

Mr. Leighton: I do not know the page number, Mr. Morris. I apologise for that.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Page 3205.

Mr. Leighton: I am advised that the page number is 3205. The amendment relates to clause 1(2), which authorises further legislative powers for the European Parliament. Within the intergovernmental titles of the treaty the European Parliament is mentioned nearly a dozen times—for example, article J.7 requires the presidency to consult the Parliament on matters of foreign policy. In view of those enhanced powers in the intergovernmental part of the treaty, would it not be appropriate for the House to decide whether the Government should keep it fully informed, through six-monthly reports, of the activities of the European Parliament? That is what the amendment asks for, so may I request that you reconsider your selection, Mr. Morris?

Mr. Chairman: I shall consider the matter, without commitment. The hon. Gentleman will, of course, be aware that we have already debated that issue.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I welcome your decision to allow a debate and vote on new clause 75; that will be widely welcomed. But I express some concern about the other part of your statement, in which you told the Committee that you did not now intend to allow amendment No. 27 to be formally moved, debated or even voted upon—I believe that that is what you implied.

Our case for a debate flows from the Attorney-General's statement at the time of the original debate on the group of amendments that included amendment No. 27. That statement purported to change totally the legal standing of the amendment and its possible impact on the legislation. The Attorney-General's statement was not universally approved, and ran contrary to the long-held view of the legal officers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, let alone the long-held views of many legal and constitutional experts outside the House.

I put it to you, Mr. Morris, that that statement changed the whole nature of the circumstances that apply. That being so, the House is entitled to a further discussion about amendment No. 27. When I spoke in the original debate, I said that I intended to move that amendment and to ask for a vote upon it, and I believe that, notwithstanding our welcome for your decision on new clause 75, the Committee is entitled to that opportunity.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising that point of order, but I must tell him, and all other hon. Members of the Committee, that I have come to my conclusion after a great deal of thought. I repeat what I have said all the way through—that hon. Members are most welcome to come to see me and discuss such matters. However, I should say that in the circumstances I attach great importance to our having a focused debate rather than a repetition of earlier and broader debates.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. No one is opposed to the idea of a focused debate. The reality is that new clause 75 and amendment No. 27 are completely within the same focus and address the same point. Even if you say that we should not be allowed to reopen the discussion on amendment No. 27, surely that is different from preventing the Committee from having a vote on it. That is an entirely different point. As amendment No. 27 is clearly in order—there is no question of its not being in order—and as it has been debated, I find it strange that you should rule that the Committee should be denied the opportunity to vote on it.

The Chairman: As I have told the Committee several times, I am always happy to assist right hon. and hon. Members. However, it is not our practice to argue the merits or otherwise of my selection across the Committee Floor. I hope that we can leave it at that.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. When you decided to select new clause 75, did you consider new clause 67? Did you consider whether, as it deals with the area of discussion relevant to new clause 75, it might be possible to link it with that new clause and to allow a vote on it?

The Chairman: I obviously take into consideration all new clauses that are in order. I come to a conclusion having considered them.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Morris, concerning the group of amendments on which we are about to embark and especially amendment No. 30, to which is attached amendments (a) to (k). May we have a separate Division on amendment (h)? I hope that a Division can be called at the relevant point of the Bill. You will be aware——

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has been with us for almost every sitting of the Committee. He must know

that the Chair must listen to the debate and then decide whether a Division is appropriate. It is not a matter for a point of order before we get to the debate.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I apologise for breaking the rule. In Standing Committees, the convention has been as I described it. I apologise for breaking the convention if there are different rules for a Committee of the whole House.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has registered his point. There is no point in arguing it now.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As one of the authors of new clause 75, I clearly welcome your decision to select it. However, I am slightly surprised by your ruling on amendment No. 27. New clause 75 was specifically worded to be complementary to amendment No. 27. I wonder whether you would reconsider.

The Chairman: I have given a substantive answer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who raised that matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I heard you say that there will be no debate on amendment No. 27 and that we shall not be able to vote on it. I can just about see the argument for not having a debate, but for the life of me I cannot understand why we —Back-Bench Members and the lot of us—cannot have a Division on amendment No. 27 in view of the fact that a Division takes only a quarter of an hour. The Government allow us to talk a donkey's hind leg off, but they are frightened of a vote that they may lose.

You, Mr. Morris, have selected new clause 75, but you have told us that we cannot vote on amendment No. 27. I ask myself which part of the Committee will be laughing about that. It is Tory Ministers. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not always."] It is on this issue. They are enamoured by the idea that there is to be no vote. Why can we not go through the Lobbies for a quarter of an hour on one of the most important issues on which the Government might well be defeated? We can have votes on everything else, but not on this. I smell a rat.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman can smell what he likes. Time is not a consideration. I suggest that he reads new clause 75 with a little more care.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I think that you will know that, despite probably being a problem boy on this Bill, I have paid the highest tribute, both inside and outside the Chamber, to the way in which you have conducted the proceedings. We should all like to pay tribute to you for the way in which you have done it.

My sole point of order is that amendment No. 27 is the only amendment to allow the Committee to determine the simple issue whether the British taxpayer should be obliged to pay a twelfth share of the costs of the social chapter for the 11. My constituents have views on that matter, and I think that the majority of Members of Parliament would probably take the view that the amendment should be passed so that we can determine whether it is fair to ask the British people to pay for something being undertaken by the other 11. What possible reason can there be for depriving us of the opportunity to express an opinion on whether our people should be obliged to pay those costs? I have been in the House of Commons for a long time and I genuinely cannot understand the argument against giving us that opportunity. Otherwise, how can we express our view as to whether it is right and proper for British taxpayers to pay someone else's costs?

The Chairman: I have given a substantive answer and made an offer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads new clause 75 with a little more care.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You rightly say that we should read the new clause with a great deal of care and I am sure that that will be done. Having read it again with even more care, and knowing that other hon. Members have read it with even more legal knowledge than care, one may well take the view that amendment No. 27 and new clause 75 are different and will have a very different impact on the progress of the Bill, which is obviously of great importance to many hon. Members. If that is the case, may I beseech you that, if a significant weight of Back-Bench opinion wants to vote on amendment No. 27, that can be done?

The Chairman: I listen to submissions.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): The main security threat to western Europe is no longer the Soviet Union, or even any of its successors, but the dangers inherent in the economic, political and ethnic instabilities that have affected the continent of Europe as a result of the break-up of the Warsaw pact and the consequential growth of nationalism.

I was fortunate enough to be in Berlin on the day that the wall came down and I saw east Germans—mainly young east Germans—flooding through into west Berlin to begin the process of German unification. That process has been constitutionally completed, but economically the strains and tensions of reconciling two quite opposed systems have provoked the nationalism, racism and phobia redolent of a previous and more threatening era. That is why I believe that Germany and German unification must be the starting point for our debate on a common European foreign and security policy. Only by incorporating a united Germany within a developing, common and coherent European policy can we hope to avoid the instability, divisions and nationalism that have twice scarred western Europe this century.

In trying to understand what is being attempted, it is worth while thinking back to the ideas underlying the treaty of Rome. Moves towards European integration after the second world war sprang from two main factors: first, the realisation that strength lies in unity; secondly, the overriding need to avoid further military conflict in western Europe.

The European Community, however, is much more than an alliance of sovereign nations which happen to have common interests because of their common geographical location. The treaty of Rome emphasises mutual interdependence. One of the founding fathers of the Community, Jean Monnet, put it this way:

"Co-operation between nations, however important, does not solve anything. What we must seek is a pooling of interests of the peoples of Europe."

[Mr. Geoffrey Hoon]

Those words remind me of the words of Benjamin Franklin, who put the same idea in a simpler way when he warned the newly established American states that they must either hang together

"or they would surely hang separately."

Interdependence has made it possible for the people of Europe, who have fought each other for centuries, to live together in peace and to continue the process of building political unity. Once political and economic destinies are linked, war becomes unthinkable. The end of the cold war gives a further opportunity to link the destinies of western Europe to those of eastern and central Europe.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My hon. Friend has been talking about peace—and I am sure that he will agree that no one is keener than me to have a lasting peace in Europe. We should never again have the horrors of the two world wars that have cursed this century. Why does my hon. Friend believe that we cannot achieve peace on the terms that I have just outlined by retaining national independence and the closest co-operation? Is it not ironic that my hon. Friend should refer to a lasting peace at a time when there is a dispute between France and ourselves?

We should also consider what is happening in the rest of Europe, with the continued bloodshed and horror in the former Yugoslavian state. The sort of remedy that we want is not the false sort of unity of a federal Europe about which Jean Monnet was concerned, but the closest co-operation between states that remain independent.

4 pm

Mr. Hoon: My hon. Friend has been a Member of the House much longer than I have, and I know that in the course of his experience he will have seen the various steps towards that greater unity and understanding among the peoples of Europe. That is a delicate and difficult process that involves proceeding in a pragmatic way, step by step. The results will not be achieved overnight, but eventually the peoples of Europe will, together, build that confidence —which is what I suspect both sides of the Committee are seeking to achieve.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Would not my hon. Friend consider that the basic difference between the creation of the United States of America and a united states of Europe is simple? Initially, there was a strong belief in a unilingual unit and in the need to build the United States, whereas we face a different prospect. We face the imposition from above of a machinery that has not been agreed by the people involved.

It is plain, even from the small difficulties that we currently have with France, that, if there is no general agreement among the peoples on their wish to be governed by machinery that they do not believe represents them, those people will take direct action outside parliamentary institutions, and the results will be unpleasant, and certainly unhelpful.

Mr. Hoon: I concede, frankly and openly, that historical parallels are always dangerous. I am not suggesting that there is an exact parallel between the United States of America and the present situation in the European Community. I hope that nothing that I am saying is likely to cause great alarm to my hon. Friend.

At present, independent nations are working together, particularly in the context of a common foreign policy association which is building on successes, to try to achieve still greater co-operation. I am not suggesting the imposition of anything from the top down—for the exercise to work, the independent countries must agree to share various approaches. I do not think that that is such a remarkable phenomenon.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend is being extremely generous in giving way—his speech is arousing great interest in the House. He mentioned that he was in Berlin on the day that the wall came down. Does he not agree that the Maastricht treaty was conceived before the wall came down, so it is in a time warp and is old-fashioned? The most important event to have happened in Europe is that the wall has come down and the totalitarian regimes have gone—Maastricht does nothing to enhance that.

The Maastricht treaty erects new economic barriers where there was once a physical barrier. If it is difficult for countries such as Britain to achieve the convergence criteria and for the pound to stay in the exchange rate mechanism, what chance do the zloty or the rouble have of staying in the ERM? Surely we want a wider arrangement to take in the whole of Europe, not the old-fashioned Maastricht treaty, which was conceived in the circumstances that prevailed before the wall came down.

Mr. Hoon: Some of the early ideas which led to the Maastricht treaty might have been thought of before the removal of the Berlin wall, but undoubtedly the treaty was negotiated in detail and agreed well after that period. I am not going to be tempted to comment on the economic implications of my hon. Friend's question; I should probably be ruled out of order if I did.

In the context of the debate about a common foreign policy, I do not understand my hon. Friend's objections. What we are trying to do is build together a process of greater understanding within the European Community and, in the context of my hon. Friend's question, beyond into central and eastern Europe. I cannot see why anyone should object to that process.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): If the hon. Gentleman is going to avoid economics, could he at least urge his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) not only to read the treaty more closely but to study the history? From the beginning, there was no question but that the United States was going to be unilingual, as is obvious from the various debates that took place at the time. The process of developing common institutions so that the rivalry between various states would be reduced, if not eliminated, is the same as the basis on which the Community developed.

Mr. Hoon: I accept that, although I repeat my earlier caution about historical parallels.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. As to his analogy with the United States, does he not remember that the rather brutal establishment of the United States was the result of a mixture of a colonial rebellion against an imperial power and the genocide of the native Americans?

If my hon. Friend is now envisaging the establishment of a federal Europe, will he not reflect that the Maastricht treaty does not take us in the direction of the checks and balances contained in the American federal constitution? It takes us in the opposite direction of an unelected legislative body—the Commission—and, in the case of foreign policy, a policy commission that will be, in effect, imposing foreign policy on nation states that have fought for their own democratic accountability.

Mr. Hoon: I included the quotation from Benjamin Franklin because it quite nicely covered the point that I wished to make. I now regret that, because it has provoked an historical debate which is not strictly relevant to our discussions.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. It is intriguing to sit next to my very dear friend the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and hear him praise the role of the nation state.

I put it to my hon. Friend that my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has made some very good points about the question of the necessary democratisation and making the European Community responsive to the wishes and needs of people as a whole, in this country and elsewhere. Surely the argument must be entered that one should look at those institutions within the European Community and make them responsive and more democratic, and not argue for isolationism?

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is the direction in which I hope to continue.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoon: No, I should make some progress.

I am strongly convinced that, if we are to achieve a common foreign policy, it will be on the basis of a series of pragmatic steps. A step-by-step approach is the only way in which we can transfer relevant competences from member states to the European Community. The present European Community and Atlantic alliance will continue to be the solid foundations of the common efforts in the foreseeable future.

Even those who would oppose the deliberate development of any common policy must recognise that the European Community has, over the years, developed pragmatically policies which are, in effect, the outlines of a common foreign policy. Sanctions against South Africa, action in the middle east and statements about Salman Rushdie are indications of the way in which the European Community is reacting collectively to the pressure of events. That may or may not be the outline of an emerging common foreign policy but, whether or not hon. Members approve, it is happening and we must take account of it.

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoon: No. I had better continue my speech.

The implementation of a common foreign and security policy will allow the European Community and its member states to maintain their role on the world stage. It will contribute to the transition from confrontation to a more common approach. These policies need to be based on agreed principles. The implementation of those principles should have clear objectives.

First, peace and security should be maintained. Secondly, disputes should be settled peacefully, and international law respected. Thirdly, there should be a mutual, balanced and verifiable reduction of armed forces and armaments. Fourthly, an international order should be promoted, based on respect for human rights. As the European Community develops those policies——

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoon: In a moment.

As the European Community develops those policies, consistent with the step-by-step philosophy that I have already outlined, we need to develop priorities for joint action.

Mr. Mandelson *rose*——

Mr. Hoon: I shall now give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Mandelson: It is important, given the instances of joint action and statements to which my hon. Friend referred, to make it clear that they were jointly entered into by the respective Governments and member states. Those decisions were not made for, by or on behalf of member states by the Commission.

It is wrong for my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who I notice, having made his point, has left the Chamber, to suggest that it is the Commission that will conduct foreign policy on our behalf. Article J of the treaty specifically precludes that, and says that it will be—and it should be, in my view—a matter for intergovernmental machinery.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should have given way to him earlier. He has made the point much more clearly than I have done. Therefore, I thank him for his comments.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Hoon: I shall now give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, courteous as always, for giving way. He listed four principles upon which European foreign policy co-operation should be based. Could I suggest a fifth: that it should apply to all member states equally? How confident and convinced is the hon. Gentleman that Greece will apply sanctions on Serbia?

Mr. Hoon: That is precisely the issue that we need to develop. We must achieve mutual confidence. If we are to persuade all 12 sovereign states to take the action that the hon. Gentleman and I agree is necessary, they will do so only on the basis of the step-by-step approach that I have outlined. I hope that, for once, we shall be able to agree that action will be taken only if together we take those steps.

Action will be taken only as the result of success in other areas. That will lead to the confidence that is required for action to be taken later. There is no good reason why the European Community should not reach agreements concerning non-European Community nations. The remainder of Europe ought to be capable of being approached by the European Community in a consistent manner—as should the United States and Japan. Relations between the European Community and those countries ought to be the subject of a common rather than an individual nation state approach.

Mr. Spearing: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hoon: In a moment.

Similarly, participation in the conference on security and co-operation in Europe and the contribution that we can make together towards strengthening the United Nations ought to be policies that we are capable of developing together rather than as separate nation states.

Mr. Spearing: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend, who has been most generous in giving way. I think that he is going a little far in suggesting that all these matters will come within the ambit of the European Community. Has not the Foreign Secretary attempted time and again to make a distinction between the European Community and the articles in the treaty that we are discussing that relate to it, and the wider union under which a common foreign policy is required?

Despite that distinction, I think that my hon. Friend may be correct. Despite what my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said, article J.8 provides the Commission with powers of initiation. As that is a corporate body, strong in muscle, I have no doubt that its initiative will be important.

Mr. Hoon: Having had a number of years of experience of the European Commission, I do not find it quite so frightening as my hon. Friend appears to do.

Mr. Spearing: He was part of the machinery.

4.15 pm

Mr. Hoon: The reason why I have less concern than my hon. Friend appears to have is clear in the terms of his own question: the Commission may have the powers of initiation. Why should we be afraid of the powers of initiation?

Mr. Spearing: Because they are non-elected.

Mr. Hoon: They have the power to put forward ideas. It is then, even under the existing arrangement, for the member states to decide what should be the conclusion. I cannot see why that should be such a frightening prospect.

The essentially pragmatic development of a foreign policy, in my view, resembles the way in which the Community already deals with the GATT issue, external trade negotiations—issues that we are already, in effect, comfortable with. Therefore, having built on those successes, we can look into these other areas for the development of a policy.

The Community cannot allow itself to be isolated from other states in the world community as an enclave of prosperous industrialised nations. The Community has an obligation to contribute worldwide to overcoming poverty and underdevelopment, implementing human and civil rights, containing conflicts and guaranteeing peace. A European Community foreign and security policy is the prerequisite for meeting those obligations effectively.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): As the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) explained in his interesting speech, this group of amendments deals with European co-operation on a common foreign and security policy. I underline the word co-operation. From experience in the past three years, I must say that I am strongly in favour of such co-operation as it is at present practised and as it is laid down for the future in the treaty. I and others have been trying to work the system for three years and I believe that I have some knowledge of both its strengths and its limitations.

The principle is, and will remain, a simple one. Where we can work together as Europeans, we do so; where we cannot work together, for lack of agreement or where there is no need to do so, we are free to go our own way.

I am quite clear in my own mind that this system of co-operation, although not magic, adds to the effectiveness of British foreign policy without reducing our ability to protect our own British interests. As the hon. Member for Ashfield illustrated, there is a massive flow of diplomatic business already through this channel of European co-operation. Much of this activity is relatively uncontroversial, so it does not find a place in the newspapers, but I will give one or two examples that right hon. and hon. Members may recall.

The concept of safe havens for the Kurds in northern Iraq is much on my mind today, because I saw the delegation of the Iraq national conference this morning. This concept of safe havens for the Kurds was originally a British proposal, but it gave immediate and decisive impetus once it was adopted by the European Council at the urging of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It was a clear example of how a decisive move at the European level achieves worldwide acceptance.

Dr. Cunningham: There are reports, which the right hon. Gentleman probably heard this morning, of some apparent change in the position of Her Majesty's Government with respect to Iraq. Can the Foreign Secretary clarify this for us? Does he stand by what he said, for example, at the Scottish Conservative party conference in Perth on 10 May 1991? He said then:

"There can be no question of any relaxation in sanctions whilst Saddam Hussein's bloody persecution of minorities continues. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Saddam Hussein's government could fulfil all the conditions laid down by the United Nations for the removal of sanctions. Only a new government will enable Iraq to be re-admitted to the community of nations."

Is that still the position of Her Majesty's Government or has it changed?

Mr. Hurd: The requirements of the Security Council have not changed in any important sense since that time. Those are the requirements with which Iraq has to comply before there can be any question of lifting sanctions. What I and others said around that time in 1991 is that it is hard —indeed, it is still impossible—to imagine Saddam Hussein being able or willing to comply with those Security Council requirements. Those are the requirements, and compliance with those requirements was and remains the test.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend said as he opened his remarks that we can run our policies where we need to, but where they are better run at European level and where we should co-ordinate and co-operate we should do so; nobody would disagree with that. However, with respect, that is not what it says in the treaty. Paragraph 1 of article J1 states:

"The Union and its Member States shall"—

not "can"—

"define and implement a foreign and security policy . . . covering all areas of foreign and security policy."

That says something totally different from what my right hon. Friend said.

Mr. Hurd: The treaty goes on to explain how that is to be done, and I shall do the same. It explains how common positions and joint actions are to be decided. They are to be decided by unanimity and I shall come to that in a moment.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: I should rather get on. I was going to give another example at a lower level following the example of Iraq.

Last summer, I went with Ministers of the EC troika to South Africa and, as a result of that visit, we now have a team of EC observers in the townships of South Africa alongside those from the Commonwealth and the United Nations, to help deter and prevent the violence which has caused so much misery and distrust among those trying to negotiate for a new South Africa.

In the world of today, it is welcomed by all concerned in South Africa that the European Community, alongside others, should take such a responsibility, with Britain sending individuals to the European and Commonwealth teams.

Equally, it was as a member of the European Community that we joined in the multilateral talks now going on in the Arab-Israel peace process. It would be regarded as frivolous or bizarre by Arabs, Israelis, Americans, Russians and everybody else if, instead of joining in as Europeans, we began to shove and push for individual national representation in such talks. There would be no point and it would be regarded as bizarre and ridiculous.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that those of us who have long experience of dealing inside the Community with the question of the middle east have found that there was a clear division between countries that had direct involvement in the Masraq and Maghreb and those that were prepared to take a more even-handed attitude? Does he accept that the suggestion that Britain can adopt an attitude towards the middle east only if it works through the Community begs the question of those nations that have already entered negotiations carrying the baggage of their long Arab-Israeli connections?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with the hon. Lady. Of course, as a matter of law we could do that. Each of the 12 countries could pursue and elaborate its own policy towards the middle east, but that makes no sense in today's world.

In the past few years, we have managed—not without difficulty—to work out a whole series of statements and positions among the 12, and it is on that basis that we take part in the multilateral part of the Arab-Israeli peace process. That is a good thing; it is better than if we, the Germans, the French and the Italians all worked out our own policies and then scrapped for priority in putting them forward.

The process of co-operation already in being is now elaborated and defined more closely in the treaty to which the Bill relates under the heading that we are discussing. It is natural that the House should look carefully to see whether the character of the system is being changed. Nobody is seriously challenging what we are doing, but the House will want to see whether the character is being changed and whether we are being penned into a new system which would deprive us of essential rights. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), in his shrewd and perceptive speech on 25 March, included some cautionary remarks on the subject.

Those are exactly the concerns that the British Government had at the front of their mind when we negotiated this part of the treaty, on which a huge amount of time was rightly spent. We wanted to preserve the advantage of co-operation in foreign policy without depriving ourselves of freedom in cases where co-operation was not necessary or not possible. I believe that we have succeeded and I should like to explain why.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My right hon. Friend talks, rightly, about the need for co-operation and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, it is important to make sure that we treat all this with a great deal of caution. The reality is that under the provisions of the treaty, what the Foreign Secretary is saying does not accord with what is provided for under title V.

I understand my right hon. Friend's motivation, but if we have produced provisions in the treaty that bind us to support

"the Union's external and security policy actively, unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity"

refraining from actions contrary to the interests of the union and so on, we are binding ourselves—and the Foreign Secretary knows this perfectly well—to international obligations. It may be in the context of what is claimed to be separate pillars, but, for practical purposes, they are international obligations which are imposed on us and which impose constraints that will prevent us from exercising that pragmatic action which we have always been capable of pursuing, including the Gulf war.

Mr. Hurd: Nothing is imposed on us under this pillar because

"The council shall act unanimously".

It means that the obligations are obligations to which we have agreed. My hon Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is pushing me ahead a little faster than I intended to go, but I shall develop the point and go on. Then I will give way to those hon. Members to whom I have not given way.

This section of the treaty does not bring the common foreign and security policy within the ambit of the European Community. It is a separate pillar and is specifically set out as such. I think that I see the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) nod in agreement. That is why amendment No. 30 is somewhat extraordinary; it would incorporate title V of the treaty on common foreign and security policy in the 1972 Act. That incorporation would erode the structure of the pillars in a way which I should have thought the sceptics about Europe would particularly wish to prevent.

The amendment would not alter the legal character of title V which is plain on the face of the treaty, but I think that it would be incongruous for Britain, of all states, so to amend its internal law as to apply title V and this pillar of foreign and security policy as if it were part of the treaty structure of the Community. It is not.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I supported the separate pillars and the high level of co-operation that has been achieved. I am worried about paragraphs 3 and 4 of article J8. There, for the first time, the Commission gets the power and the obligation to begin

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

things. Whereas the rest of the articles are about the Council and the clear division between the Commission's responsibility under the treaty of Rome, in article J8 we have the Council and the Commission getting the right and the obligation to initiate. That is the beginning of an erosive process.

Mr. Hurd: That is what happens now, but I will come on to the role of the Commission in a moment. The first point I was trying to make about the new structure, the step-by-step approach that we are contemplating under the treaty, is that the pillar is separate.

Secondly, the European Court of Justice will have no jurisdiction in these matters. I know that that has been a worry. The European Court might take the opening statements of intention and turn them into a legal obligation, but article L of the treaty sets out the areas that will fall within the jurisdiction of the court. Title V is absent and is, therefore, excluded from the jurisdiction of the court.

Mr. Leighton *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will just come on to the point about the Commission if I may and I will give way to the hon. Member later.

In this part of the treaty, because it is a separate pillar outside the Community, the Commission has held a monopoly of initiative. The Commission, under the treaty, will be "fully associated"—those are the words in the treaty—with the work of the union on this subject, as it is today. A Commissioner today attends meetings on foreign policy co-operation. He is able to speak. He is able to make proposals—the hon. Gentleman's point—but he has no monopoly of such proposals, as he would have if the pillar were part of the Community. Because it is separate, the Commissioner is there and can make proposals, but he has no monopoly, and I am convinced that that is in practice a thoroughly sensible arrangement.

4.30 pm

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford pointed out, there is often an overlap between different kinds of action open to the Community and its member states. It is an overlap, in effect, between the economic and the political and, therefore an overlap between the responsibility of the Community and that of member states acting in co-operation.

An obvious example is sanctions, which are specifically provided for in article 228a. The Committee will see there that before sanctions can be imposed by the Community —it is an economic measure coming within the scope of the Community—there must be a common position or joint action decided by the Council under the common foreign and security policy, and such a common position must be arrived at unanimously. So it is curious that there should be an amendment that would modify an extremely important provision about the imposition of sanctions.

Mr. Leighton: The Foreign Secretary has been talking of co-operation in foreign policy matters. How well does he suggest such co-operation worked when, under German pressure—and, I suspect, against the better judgment of the right hon. Gentleman—we precipitately gave diplomatic recognition to Croatia and other Yugoslav states before the boundaries were fixed and before agreements were arrived at on ethnic minorities, which partly was the cause of the war?

Mr. Hurd: I have an extensive passage in my notes on that incident, which was raised when the Committee began to consider the amendments a few days ago, so I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will deal with that extremely fair and important point.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend says that there is nothing new about this because the Commission has the powers already. I understand from the Single European Act that the Commission is associated with political co-operation, but is not associated with security co-operation. The Commission may put forward proposals now, but it does not have the power to put forward proposals that will be given to it under the Maastricht treaty.

Further, the European Parliament has significantly more involvement under the Maastricht treaty than it had under the Single European Act. So the position after the Maastricht treaty is not the same as it was after the Single European Act. This pillar is not totally apart from the European institutions. Those institutions have far more power than they had under the Single European Act, and under the debate and discussions that will take place in 1996 with a view to 1998, the probability is that they will get even more.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right to say that there is a change. There is what I would call a slight change in the role of the European Parliament. I do not think that, in practice, there is a change in the role of the Commission today, and I strongly disagree with my hon. Friend's last point. We went to considerable trouble to make sure that wherever in the treaty there was a reference to a review in 1996—there are two or three such references—the review was without prejudice.

It is part of my case—my hon. Friend and I crossed swords on this issue in the debate on subsidiarity—for which evidence flows in all the time, that we are not on a conveyor belt and that we are not moving inexorably to a degree of federalism or a centralising tendency of a kind that most hon. Members would reject. To suggest otherwise is increasingly not borne out by the facts of Europe. We succeeded, and one minor proof of that is that we succeeded in the negotiations in preventing any reference to future reviews which prejudiced the outcome of those reviews.

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am anxious to make progress.

I am illustrating the characteristics of the pillar—of the separate nature of this part of the treaty, as opposed to the normal structure of the Community. The Committee will see the provision in paragraph 5 of article J8 for political directors to prepare the work of the Council in foreign and security policy. They will of course need to work closely, as they do today, with COREPER, but we thought it right that the autonomous work of political directors responsible to Foreign Ministers should be specifically spelt out in the treaty again to make clear that it is a separate pillar of co-operation between member states.

Finally, there is the provision of unanimity to which my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) brought me a few moments ago. The mention in

paragraph 2 of article J3 of voting by a qualified majority contains a double lock. First, there must be unanimity to decide a joint action and, secondly, there must be unanimity in agreeing to the use of qualified majority voting. That means that if the Council, or the British Government, were to decide that all decisions, no matter how small, needed, to be taken by unanimity, they would be. One can imagine carefully chosen circumstances in which qualified majority voting could make a policy more effective, for example, by speeding up the process of taking decisions on implementation. However, under the treaty, that could not be a general rule, and each proposal that any matter should be decided by qualified majority voting would have to be decided by unanimity. That is the nature of the double lock.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend is, as usual, being exceedingly reassuring. However, there are many instances in article J of the untrammelled sovereignty of nation states within the Community being, to a greater or lesser degree, circumscribed by the provisions of the article. For example, paragraph 4 of article J1 states:

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively".

It adds that the Council shall ensure that those principles are adhered to. Paragraph 2 of article J2 states:

"Member States shall ensure that their national policies conform to the common positions."

There are other examples. What my right hon. Friend says by way of reassurance about majority voting may be true, but the article as a whole gives the impression that the treaty gives precedence to the interests of the union over those of the member states.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right; it is a crucial point. The common positions and joint actions all have to be approved unanimously. There is no question of the Commission, a majority of member states, or even 11 member states, seeking to impose on this country or on any other member state a common position or joint action. That is precluded, not by the practice of the Community but by the wording of the treaty. That is the essential answer to my hon. Friend's point.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin).

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): My right hon. Friend's assurance is very fulsome, but there is still concern that there will be a good deal of cross-infection from the external relations run by the Commission through the Community which, after all, runs trade, which is a large proportion of, and a large political influence on, overall foreign policy. Will he give the House a categorical assurance that we shall never find ourselves in a position where the Commission grabs to itself more and more initiative at the expense of the unanimity provisions in the foreign policy pillar?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend, being a smart fellow, is retiring very quickly from any argument based on the texts and is moving to what he calls the danger of political infection.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: Let me answer my hon. Friend. I have tried to answer his question already. I do not believe that in real life there can always be a full separation in practical policy between what one does economically and what one does politically. I have given one example—fairly, I hope—which was that of economic sanctions. It would be absurd for the Council to sit around discussing economic sanctions without hearing from the Commission which, under the Community, would have to implement them. There has to be some marriage of minds in many of these cases. There has to be an interplay, which is why it is perfectly reasonable that the Commission should be fully associated with the work of foreign policy co-operation.

However, my hon. Friend is correct in taking the view that it would not be reasonable if full association, for which there are very strong practical arguments, were to drift into a situation in which the Commission had a monopoly of initiative and member states developed the habit of doing what the Commission thought right. But that is miles away from what happens now and from what is provided for in the treaty. As I have said, the review provisions contain nothing to suggest that we are on a conveyor belt going in that direction. It is not the way in which foreign policy co-operation is discussed and agreed on.

I hope that what I have said is a reasonably full exposition of the legal provisions that separate this part of the treaty from ordinary, orthodox Community action. We spent a great deal of time ensuring that the advantages of co-operation were not bought at the expense of freedom of action. We were not alone in doing so, as others wanted to achieve the same end. Let me cite three examples, all of which have been mentioned during the debates on the Bill.

There is nothing in the treaty, or in real political life, to prevent us from pursuing our national policy on dependent territories, such as Hong Kong and the Falkland Islands. As I have said, member states must agree unanimously that a particular issue needs to become the subject of joint action. That being the case, Britain would have to agree specifically if Hong Kong or the Falklands, or any other issue, were to become the subject of joint action. In addition, attached to the treaty is a declaration on dependent territories, recognising our right, in cases of irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the 12 and those of one of our dependent territories, to act in the interests of that territory.

Secondly, there is the question of membership of the Security Council, which is dealt with specifically in article J5, as we and the French were keen that it should be. Article J5 suggests that members of the Security Council that are also members of the Community should work together. Well, that happens already. The article suggests that we should inform partners of events in the Security Council. That, too, happens already. The treaty contains no suggestion of a joint European seat on the Security Council. Indeed, it assumes the opposite. The specific responsibility of the existing permanent members from the European Community—the United Kingdom and France—under the United Nations charter are recognised in the treaty.

I know that several right hon. and hon. Members visited New York recently and saw the United Nations in action. One or two of them have told me that Britain and France both have as their current permanent representatives on the Security Council particularly strong-minded and experienced ambassadors. Those representatives work

[Mr. Hurd]

closely with the Spanish ambassador, who represents an elected member of the Council, and with the other nine Community ambassadors in New York. However, there is no question of the responsibilities of Britain and France under the United Nations charter being undermined, either now or in the future. As emerged in a recent debate in this Chamber, Britain and France currently contribute more than any other country to the peacekeeping activities of the United Nations.

Sir Russell Johnston: Lest the Foreign Secretary, because of the nature of interventions, reaches the conclusion that what he is saying has the unanimous support of the Committee, I say simply that I am surprised that he is taking such a long time to explain why foreign affairs initiatives could be successfully stopped. The right hon. Gentleman must realise as well as I do that, in all international institutions, unanimity is normally a recipe for inaction.

Mr. Hurd: I am under no temptation to assume that my remarks have the unanimous support of hon. Members. Indeed, with regard to the Bill, that is the least of my temptations. The hon. Gentleman and I have crossed swords on this point previously. It is from experience, rather than from a doctrinal or theological standpoint, that I say that, in respect of all sorts of matters that come up in the Community, members should persevere until unanimity is achieved.

It simply does not make sense to box one or two members into a corner, making it necessary for them to go back to their Parliaments and say that, while they felt strongly about the matter in question, they had been outvoted. I am not in favour of that kind of situation. That is why, in spite of a good deal of pressure during the negotiations, we held out—we did so successfully, and we were not alone—for the legal provisions and the emphasis on unanimity that I have described. The hon. Gentleman thinks that that impedes action; I believe that, in practice, it does no such thing.

4.45 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor: Let the Foreign Secretary tell the Liberal Democrats not to be so pessimistic. They ought to look at page 130 of the treaty, where it is made abundantly clear—no one seems to have noticed this—that when there is a qualified majority in matters of foreign affairs and security, every member state is under an obligation to go to the extent possible to avoid preventing a unanimous decision. Are not the Liberal Democrats being unduly pessimistic? Does not the declaration indicate quite clearly that the Government are under a legal obligation in this respect?

Mr. Hurd: It is true that the treaty contains an exhortation, which was put there by people who were disappointed that we had managed to retain the principle of unanimity. We have no difficulty in accepting the admonition that we should do our best to achieve unanimity. That was an attempt to meet the point that has been raised by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). However, the treaty is perfectly clear. Naturally, the main criticism comes from those who think that unanimity is an impediment to effective action. My practical experience suggests otherwise.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend was good enough to ask me to write for the Conservative manifesto committee the paper on the future of Europe. I should be glad if he would address himself to the text of that document and to the question of unanimity, which he has just been stressing. I am sure he appreciates that article J8(2) states:

"The council shall act unanimously, except for procedural questions and in the case referred to in Article J.3(2)."

My right hon. Friend will note that the definition at the beginning of article J3 refers to the procedure. Paragraph (2) of that article states clearly that, when joint action is being adopted, the Council shall define matters on which decisions are to be taken by qualified majority. My right hon. Friend says that all of this is governed by unanimity. If he thinks that I am wrong, I hope that he will point out how it is so.

Mr. Hurd: I have done so already. My hon. Friend was so busy preparing his intervention that he did not hear my answer to his question. I have already described at some length the double lock procedure that governs article J3(2). I shall not repeat myself, as my hon. Friend will find my words in *Hansard*. There is a double lock to ensure unanimity before article J3(2) can be operated in any particular case. I hope that my hon. Friend will join me in preparing the next Conservative election manifesto's section on Europe, following ratification of the treaty. In view of our joint experience, we may find a good deal of common ground. However, we are not yet at that point.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) raised, perfectly correctly, the situation in Yugoslavia. This is an unfavourable example, which is why the hon. Gentleman referred to it. No one looking back at this tragedy will be able to feel anything but anger and frustration. From the beginning, I felt—and I believe that I said—that it would be unreasonable to suppose that, however great might be the harmony between the 12 members of the Community, we could impose peace in Yugoslavia. It is not possible to impose peace from outside when people are determined to fight and kill each other.

I do not want to spell out the whole history of policy on Yugoslavia because the House debated it recently. I just record in that context my conviction that it has been entirely right for the members of the Community to act together and that any other course would have been damaging, perhaps disastrous.

The most difficult point along the road was that cited by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Guildford—the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in January 1992, decided upon on 16 December 1991. Some critics in this country, notably my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher, and some people outside—Germans, Austrians and others—believed that the Community recognised Croatia and Slovenia too late. My noble Friend Lord Carrington, the Opposition Front Bench and my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs over which he presides believed that we recognised too early.

I do not believe that the timing was decisive in what followed. I do not think that it would have made sense to have withheld recognition much longer, or that the timing of recognition had any effect on the tragedy which

followed in another country. But in the context of this debate it is worth pausing for a moment to consider what the alternative was to agreed Community recognition at the time when we recognised.

The alternative would have been that the Germans and others would have recognised earlier than we did, and the British, French and perhaps some others would have recognised somewhat later. I cannot believe that that disintegration of decision taking would have had anything but an unhealthy affect. Certainly there would have been no effective pressure on President Tudjman to accommodate his policies to the Serb minority of Croatia, which is the argument usually put forward for later recognition.

Dr. Cunningham: Does not that tragic example highlight the problems of working together in co-operation and unanimity? Is not the reality that the Germans were threatening, and had been threatening for some time, to act unilaterally and that, in doing so, they forced the hand of the Community in a disastrous way? We are still living with the consequences of those disastrous decisions, taken for the worst of all possible reasons, and certainly not for good foreign policy reasons.

Mr. Hurd: I do not accept that analysis, and the historian will not either. The Germans held back for a long time under strong pressure from their own public opinion and their own analysis of the position. I do not think that it would have been a good thing or in any way helpful in the relationship between Croatia and Serbia if the Germans had recognised two or three months earlier. That would have had no good effect. Therefore, I do not think that disintegration of policy co-operation could have been helpful. It would have been deeply unhelpful and would have prevented us from doing the things that I am coming to.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): If the Community managed to persuade the Germans that they should delay for a few months, perhaps the Foreign Secretary could explain why in the case of Macedonia, although the majority of Community countries were in favour of recognition, one, Greece, has still been able to stop recognition. Why, if it was right in the case of Croatia, is it not right in the case of Macedonia? May we have a straight answer, please?

Mr. Hurd: Exactly the same procedure is being followed. We are trying to wait until we achieve agreement. I hope that we can make decisive progress on that matter fairly soon. I do not want to wreck that by going down the road along which the hon. Gentleman is tempting me. It is an important matter. I hope that we are reasonably close to an outcome which will help the people in Skopje and Macedonia.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does not that whole tragic business illustrate two points—first, the desirability of acting together and, secondly, having done that, the fact that we have a lot to learn, because it is surely shameful and shaming to all of us that an independent, recognised sovereign state such as Bosnia should have suffered as it has over the last year?

Mr. Hurd: I understand my hon. Friend's point. We are learning all the time. A common foreign and security policy does not transform the European union into a defence organisation. Therefore, my hon. Friend's criticism, which is widely shared, goes further than the Bill. He is one of those who, I think, would have wanted recognition earlier.

I am coming to what the member states of the European Community have done. It was right for the member states of the Community, acting together, to ask Lord Carrington to undertake pioneering work for a settlement. It was right for the member states of the Community, acting together, to set up the monitoring mission which is doing valuable work through the region. It was right for the member states of the Community, acting together under the British presidency, to summon the London conference last August and there, acting together, to set up the framework of peacemaking provided by Lord Owen, on behalf of the Community, and Cyrus Vance, on behalf of the United Nations. It was right for the member states of the Community, acting together, to provide large amounts of humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia, with Britain, France and Spain—all member states of the Community—having contributed most to the life-saving effort since then.

In the real world in which we live, it is notable that when President Clinton undertook a thorough, critical review of United States policy towards the former Yugoslavia, he concluded by putting American energy and influence behind the objectives that we in Europe had set —a negotiating framework, the pressure of sanctions, the humanitarian effort and the pursuit of war criminals. That is not a record of success; no one is claiming that. The frustration and anger remain, but it will be right to continue working together among the 12, carrying forward the effort to make peace and to keep the peace when those principally responsible for the fighting realise that they cannot achieve stable or accepted goals without a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Spearing: The Foreign Secretary has been generous in giving way. In most of his speech, he has been painting an attractive and, I hope, a true picture of international co-operation under title 3 of the Single European Act. But we are considering the treaty, where different conditions apply and where there is an obligation for a common foreign and security policy to be established, under article 1, covering all areas of foreign and security policy. Apart from the initiation of the Commission, which is formally entrenched, as my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) mentioned, does the Foreign Secretary agree that the general council of the Community will be in effect the general council of the union, and the same Ministers, with the same Commission and the same COREPER, will be dealing with a range of commercial, political and international affairs, conceivably at the same meetings and with each other at the same time? Does not that predicate a coming together? It is separate in the treaty, but surely it will be together in practice.

Mr. Hurd: In the treaty, we are certainly not repealing those parts of the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act that govern these matters. The hon. Gentleman has spent almost a lifetime criticising those articles. We are not satisfying him by repealing them. We are creating a separate structure for this purpose. The structure of how the policy is to be elaborated is set out. General guidelines are to be adopted by the European Council which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, operates by consensus. Within

[Mr. Hurd]

those guidelines, there are to be common positions and joint action established by the Council, prepared by the political directors, with the Commission fully associated. I have been over those points.

The common positions and the joint action are to be decided unanimously. We spent hours on that point. Many people wanted majority voting installed as a guiding principle for this part of the treaty. They did not succeed. If we ask how the common positions and the joint action are to be arrived at, we find the answer: it is by unanimity. Then we have to meet the hon. Gentleman's point: how do we expect to do anything by those means? In practical terms, if we are to do anything substantial in that sphere, we need to do it by unanimity.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I am grateful to the Foreign Secretary for giving way. Would not he be better able to illustrate his point if he itemised the failures and deficiencies of political co-operation in the Single European Act and, having identified the failures and defects under political co-operation, he pointed to the improvements in machinery and commitment that are contained in title V under the new Maastricht Act?

Mr. Hurd: I have been trying to give a reasonably objective account of experience in working the present system. I hope that I have not exaggerated its merits, because it has many demerits, and we are working all the time and learning from experience; but I hope that I have set it out objectively. What the treaty does is to put some aspects of the present system into treaty form—for example, the presence and importance of political directives.

5 pm

It also establishes—I have set out the four or five crucial ways in which it does so—that this is a separate process from that of ordinary Community life. Of course, we have to work the process and we have to make it succeed. I am not in favour of its being swept up eventually into the ordinary work of the Community, just as I am not in favour of the Home Office subjects—the struggle against the drug trade and terrorism—being swept up in that title. That is why I find so bizarre the amendments that would have that effect as regards the European Communities Act 1972. I am not in favour of that; I favour keeping the pillars separate and making a success of them, acknowledging, as I have said, that there will often be an overlap between the political and the economic, but believing that the machinery established here provides for that, for example, in the role of the Commission.

Here is a way of operating which works, which adds already to the effectiveness of our foreign policy and which does not inhibit it—when we wish to do something independent, we can do so. Here is a treaty which enables that to continue and to progress, not towards a final unitary or federal structure but towards greater effectiveness and good sense. I believe that this part of the treaty is worth while and that we should reject amendments that enfeeble or distort it.

Dr. Cunningham: I want to begin with a few comments about amendment No. 30 to which the Secretary of State addressed himself somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but in case he was serious in what he said about amendment No. 30, I think that he ought to recognise that it was tabled simply as part of the determination to secure a debate on these issues and not with the idea of asking the Committee to divide on it. I have no intention of doing so. That deals, I hope clearly and succinctly, with the question why that amendment is on the Order Paper.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman's general explanation of his concern about the provisions of the Maastricht treaty in this area of common foreign and security policy. I agree with his analysis of the implications of the proposals. I agree that the treaty includes an agreement on a common foreign and security policy, one of several policies of co-operation which are part of the new European union. I agree that the new arrangements will replace the system of European political co-operation which, as the Foreign Secretary said, has existed now for some considerable time, and which has been one of the stepping stones along the way to these new proposals.

I also point out to the Committee that, in talking about the external pillar of European union which relates to common foreign and security policy, article B of the common provisions, which establish the arch of the union, supported by the pillars, sets out five broad objectives, the second of which concerns foreign and security policy, and reads as follows:

"to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence."

The tenor of the exchanges across the Floor and the interventions in the right hon. Gentleman's speech have been quite surprising. It is as though co-operation in foreign policy and security was something entirely new, something of which we had had no experience or in which we had never participated before. The reality is that, for almost half a century, in various ways, this country, under Governments of both main political parties, have been involved in exactly that kind of co-operation.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment.

We have had co-operation in the United Nations, co-operation in NATO, co-operation in the Western European Union and co-operation in the European Community itself. It is passing strange to me that the whole idea of co-operation, which is one of the foundation stones on which the Labour party to which I have always belonged was built, should strike such terror into people's hearts.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does it not occur to my right hon. Friend that when there has been discussion, debate and action on co-operation, for example, in the Gulf war, with the United States—and more so with the United States than with fellow members of the Community—there has been no controversy, in the main, on the Opposition side? Co-operation with the United Nations has never been the subject of any kind of controversy. However, will my right hon. Friend not recognise that our concern is not with the fact that there should be co-operation—of course there should be—but with steps that lead directly to a federal Europe and the remarks made by our right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)? Would my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) therefore accept the distinction?

Dr. Cunningham: I do not recognise any steps in these proposals towards a federal Europe. I do not support the idea of a federal Europe. It is not our party's policy to support the establishment of a federal Europe, and I do not believe that the proposals that we are discussing today can in any way lead my hon. Friend to draw that conclusion.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: Let me deal with one intervention at a time. I am quite willing to give way, but I want to deal with my hon. Friend's intervention first.

It is the whole idea of co-operation itself which is in danger of being lost in this debate because of a tidal wave of sturm und drang, if that is an appropriate phrase, when by comparison what we need is a little good old English sang-froid.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I just want to underline the point that he is making. Many of the interventions in the debate so far have forgotten that the principles of co-operation in the European Community were clearly laid down in title III, not only the association in all the proceedings of the Commission but a phrase such as

"The Presidency and the Commission, each within its own sphere of confidence, shall have special responsibility for ensuring that such consistency is sought and maintained."

And it goes on to talk about security. These principles were established when the Single European Act went through the House, voted for by many, including the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Dr. Cunningham: Perhaps the process of the Single European Act through the House is not such a good example. I would remind the hon. Gentleman that it was guillotined through by the Government of the right hon. Baroness Thatcher—not exactly the kind of precedent that we would want to refer to in these circumstances.

Mr. Rowlands: As someone who is neither a German nor an Englishman, and therefore have no sang-froid or anything else, may I point out to my right hon. Friend that we are trying to draw attention to, if we get the chance —the tragedy these days is that Front Benches do not wind up debates, they just open them and then do not reply to them—is the difference between the language of the Single European Act and the language of paragraph 4 of article J.1. If he does not recognise the difference of language, I do not know where his language comes from.

Dr. Cunningham: I am sorry if my hon. Friend is a little sensitive about the fact that I did not refer to him as a Welshman. I regard myself as British rather than English. I was just trying to enliven the debate with a touch of humour, since it has been dragged down into turgid minutiae for too long—but I have learnt my lesson.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way for the moment.

The European Council has the role of issuing general directions for the harmonisation and implementation of European Community foreign and security policy, including agreeing guidelines for matters for possible joint action. As we know, the Council meets twice a year and operates by consensus only. It passes its agenda to meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers. That is what happens under article J.3(1), which has already been mentioned.

As with previous European political co-operation, the Council of Foreign Ministers is then charged with reaching, so far as that is possible, a common position

"on any matter of foreign and security policy of general interest in order to ensure that their combined influence is exerted as effectively as possible by means of concerted and convergent action."

As the Foreign Secretary said, that is a development of the existing state of affairs.

The first set of four specific policy guidelines for joint action was agreed by the European Council in the declaration at Maastricht. They were: the conference on security and co-operation in Europe process; the policy of disarmament and arms control in Europe, including confidence-building measures; nuclear non-proliferation; and the economic aspects of security, especially control of the transfer of military technology to third countries and control of arms exports.

I do not understand why anyone believes that we are somehow threatened—or, indeed, that our position is not strengthened—by seeking Europewide co-operation in those four crucial areas of international affairs. I certainly do not feel threatened by the idea that we should co-operate in those areas.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Surely the anxieties arise not in relation to further co-operation—everybody would welcome that—but in relation to the narrow areas in which the British national and public interest does not necessarily coincide with the European interest. A clear example must be the Falklands war, in which there was no European support whatever, although there was a clear case of aggression against the British national interest.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not necessarily accept the hon. Gentleman's premise, but I share the view expressed by the Foreign Secretary in response to several interventions on the same subject—that there are two tests to be passed before anything can be agreed by qualified majority voting, and that those tests both require unanimity. The idea that a course could be forced upon our country, as the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) suggests, is not borne out by a careful and accurate reading of the proposals.

Sir Russell Johnston *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: The second point is also apposite. Under the proposals we—and, for that matter, our European partners—reserve the right to act bilaterally, or in the line of our duty and obligations in other spheres of international affairs, whether those involve the Falklands, Hong Kong, Belize or the Commonwealth, or in any other circumstance which is not the business or the responsibility of our Community partners. No one, least of all I or the Labour party, suggests that those rights and obligations should be abandoned or jettisoned because of the treaty.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way to me; the second part of his answer has largely dealt with the point that I intended to

[Mr. Campbell]

make. The simple test is: if we wanted to, could we mount another operation similar to the Falklands operation? Is that right and ability in any way precluded or affected by the treaty? The answer to the first question is yes, and the answer to the second question is no.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I must tell the Committee, especially Conservative hon. Members, that the biggest threat to Britain's foreign policy and defence interests, and to our interests in the world in general, is the appalling state of our economy. The biggest threat to our interests results from the complete mismanagement of our economic affairs over 14 years. That is why our influence in the world is threatened and will continue to be threatened.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

5.15 pm

Dr. Cunningham: I shall make a little further progress, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

It is significant that some matters are not included in the list of the first agreed matters for co-operation that I mentioned. Industrial and technological co-operation in armaments is not included, and neither is involvement in humanitarian intervention measures. Transatlantic relations are not included either, at least for the moment.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman said, as did my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, that this is all down to unanimity. They both say that we do not have to do things if we do not want to. If there is an area of policy in which we do not wish to be involved, we can be gloriously independent and follow the interests of the United Kingdom alone. But that is not what the treaty says. It says:

"The Union . . . shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy".

We are committing ourselves, whether we agree or not. We are committing ourselves to agreeing a policy.

Dr. Cunningham: We are committing ourselves to agreeing a policy for common action where it can be agreed. If it cannot be agreed, we do not have it. In simple language, that is exactly what the treaty says. The Council of Foreign Ministers will decide which matters should be matters for joint action, and article J.3 goes on to empower the Foreign Affairs Council to decide that certain matters may be decided by qualified majority voting. A resolution to use qualified majority voting may be taken at any stage in the adoption of a subject for joint action—assuming that that has already been unanimously agreed. The Foreign Secretary cited the example of agreeing on sanctions against a country; that is a simple practical illustration.

Since all those decisions were taken at Maastricht, things have moved on, principally at the Lisbon summit last year, and also subsequently at Edinburgh. The Lisbon Council concluded that:

"The CFSP"—

that is, the common foreign and security policy—

"should contribute to ensuring that the Union's external action is less reactive to events in the outside world, and more active in the pursuit of the interests of the Union and in the creation of a more favourable international environment."

Who could disagree with that?

"This will enable the European Union to have an improved capacity to tackle problems at their roots in order to anticipate the outbreak of crises. Furthermore, the Union will be able to make clearer to third countries its own aims and interests, and to match more closely those parties' expectations of the Union."

I should have thought that that would have enjoyed a general welcome.

It was also specifically with a view to identifying areas open to joint action that the Maastricht European Council issued a statement in which the Council was invited

"to prepare a report to the European Council in Lisbon on the likely development of a CFSP with a view to identifying areas open to joint action vis-a-vis particular countries or groups of countries".

At Lisbon, a framework was also set out which included, among other things:

"systematic co-operation between Member States in the conduct of policy on any matter of foreign or security policy . . . Joint action . . . seen as a means for the definition and implementation by the Union of a policy in the framework of the CFSP in a specific issue . . . must necessarily . . . satisfy the objectives . . . set out . . . For each area, the Union should define specific objectives",

such as

"strengthening democratic principles and institutions, and respect for human and minority rights; promoting regional political stability . . . contributing to the prevention and settlement of conflicts; contributing to a more effective international co-ordination in dealing with emergency situations; strengthening existing co-operation in issues of international interest such as the fight against arms proliferation, terrorism and the traffic in . . . drugs; promoting and support good government".

We could start on that point here at home. A little charity in that regard at least would help enormously, as we have not seen many examples of good government in Britain for a long time. All the objectives are surely ones that should have widespread support, not only in the Committee, but in our country.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my right hon. Friend tell us in what context the frequent French military involvement in the Francophone countries of west Africa would come? Would it be authorised or would it be debarred by the European Community under unanimity in foreign policy? Or could the French just carry on regardless?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend has been here for the duration of the debate. Clearly he has missed the points made by some of our hon. Friends, the burden of whose argument has been that anyone's ability to act unilaterally or individually will be completely removed by the treaty. My hon. Friend cannot have it both ways. Either countries can act in what they regard as their vital, if misguided, national interests, as he describes, or they cannot. I say that they can and that the proposals do not threaten their ability to do just that.

Mr. Dykes: The right hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned the precedents for this, including the Lisbon summit. The matter goes back to the obvious link with the Single European Act. Some of the wording is different, but article 30 under title III is the exact precursor in considerable detail of the joint foreign policy. It refers to the formulation and implementation of a joint European foreign policy. Article 2(c) says:

"The determination of common positions shall constitute a point of reference for the policies of the High Contracting Parties."

Nothing could have been couched in stronger terms even then.

Dr. Cunningham: The point is well made. In Edinburgh, the European Council broadly endorsed the work at Lisbon. There will, of course, be further discussions about what should be part of that framework of conditions and what should be part of the agenda for a common foreign and security policy.

I now turn from the theory to the reality. We all recognise that what was perceived for decades as the main security threat not only to ourselves, but to the whole of western Europe, is no longer there. The Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact no longer exist, but the dangers that now arise are quite different. They are political and often based on ethnic instability in parts of the former Soviet Union, in the area around the Mediterranean and in the middle east. We need to reassess our stance in terms of foreign policy and how we operate, and militarily. I shall deal with the defence implications in a little while.

We support the implementation of common foreign and security policies which enable the Community and its member states to maintain their roles on the world stage and to contribute to the transition which is taking place now from the old confrontations and the old certainties to the different and, in many ways, far more threatening instability which approaches ever closer to the European continent—indeed, it involves some countries in Europe already.

Such policies must be based on agreed principles. The implementation should have as objectives the maintenance of peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes through respect for international law, the prevention of aggression, mutual, balanced and verifiable reductions of armed forces and armaments, the promotion of social harmony and international order based on respect for human rights, and the improvement of living standards in the developing countries. That agenda, which is my party's political agenda, is not very different from the beginnings of an agenda for the European Community, to which I referred earlier. That is a sensible approach to the development of Community foreign policy.

The areas cited resemble the ways in which the Community behaves and in which it handles problems in other contexts, such as the important discussions on the general agreement on tariffs and trade and other external trade negotiations. Major member states, such as Germany, the United Kingdom and France, often react differently to international political events. Institutional initiatives will not take away those differences. Only a process characterised by new initiatives, experiments and positive experiences can result in a common foreign policy.

The first stages will have to be based on intergovernmental co-operation, which, in practice, will function effectively only if, among all others, the major member states reach basic agreement. For the time being, it is not realistic to expect those member states to distance themselves from the comparative advantages, some of which have already been referred to, or from the advantages of economic power, of nuclear power or of permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, simply to favour a European Community framework whose reliability is not yet proven and which, in some respects, we may want seriously to question.

Those are the considerations that should govern our approach to a common foreign policy. At this stage, we make our position clear. Unlike the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who has left the Committee, we support the view that the tests of unanimity should be built in, and that we simply could not move to qualified majority voting on all these important matters.

Mr. Spearing: Most hon. Members probably agree with my right hon. Friend on qualified majority voting. In the past few moments, my right hon. Friend has persistently and consistently used the phrase "a common foreign policy", yet he and the Foreign Secretary, who stressed the phrase, have on occasions pointed out that one will come to a policy by unanimity where it is possible and where it is advantageous. Surely if one is to have a foreign policy as a nation, one must take a consistent and coherent stand over the whole range of issues. Surely that will not be so easily possible. There may be deadlock, as predicted by several hon. Members.

Dr. Cunningham: I understand my hon. Friend's intervention, but I do not understand his conclusion. In reality, it is unrealistic to suppose that, when important matters of national interest are involved, nations, whether this country, Germany or France, will abandon their own specific and important interests. I have repeatedly made that clear. The proposals do not expect countries to act in that way, and they do not anticipate that they will. That is the important and simple conclusion to draw. I am a little disappointed and somewhat surprised that my hon. Friend, who has spent far longer than I have dealing with European Community affairs in great detail, fails to draw such a fairly obvious conclusion.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. This procedure shows the advantage of a Committee stage. I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's comments about what I have been doing for the past few years—unhappily and unwillingly. [HON. MEMBERS: "You enjoy it."] I do not. I should far prefer to deal with domestic matters and not to be diverted to constitutional matters—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Oh yes.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that inside the Council, as on domestic and legislative matters, the natural interests of a nation often have to be suppressed to get some form of agreement? Although those interests may not be abandoned, they may not be publicly articulated, because there has to be some trade-off.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not want to upset or antagonise my hon. Friend, but he gave a passing impression of enjoying his long and effective chairmanship of the Scrutiny Committee. If he did not really enjoy it, he kept that well disguised. We always thought that he was enjoying it, which is why we enjoyed it—and he was very effective, too.

Of course nation states will be expected to surrender some of their sovereignty—a very emotive word—and, sometimes, although not always, it will be in their best interests as well as the common interest to do so. That has always been the case in modern government and politics, and there is nothing new about it. As I said, we have done that for decades in the United Nations, NATO, the Commonwealth and other international decisions in which our country has been involved.

I do not shrink from conceding that argument, but I oppose the continuing theme of the debate that such decisions will be forced on us, or that we will always be obliged to make concessions as a result of the proposals, as that is not my interpretation of the treaty.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

5.30 pm

Dr. Cunningham: No, I must move on.

On the defence implications of the proposals in the treaty on European union, there is an important debate about the right vehicle for the future, and whether it should be NATO—certainly not as it is presently constituted—the Western European Union, or a completely new organisation; or whether, during the inevitable and necessary change to the position of NATO or WEU, we can modify them to take on a new role.

No exact fit exists. NATO, as we know, includes the United States of America and Canada, and is all the better for that, and some members of WEU are not members of the European Community. We all recognise, however, that the circumstances have changed fundamentally, and that our institutions and plans must change too.

The successful management of those changes is vital to our national and international interests, but we need better systems, and before we abandon any of the old systems, we need to be convinced that those proposed in their place would be at least as effective and, hopefully, more so. I need a lot of convincing that, at least for the foreseeable future, we should not retain NATO and change its role, but that is on the agenda for discussion, as is the role of WEU. In the Community, as well as in NATO, there are conflicting views about all that.

I cannot speak for the new French Government, but the outgoing Government appeared to believe that Europe should have its own defence identity and that it should not be based on NATO. My party's position, and I believe that of the Government, has been the reverse: it should be based on NATO, which is a proven and effective organisation with which we have had long and effective associations. The debate must continue.

NATO's existence makes it unnecessary for the European Community to have its own military role. NATO remains the principal defence organisation for western Europe and, as it links with the United States and Canada, we have a powerful force. In the foreseeable future, NATO will have to retain its role in the territorial defence of western Europe.

The NATO rapid reaction force was established in recognition of that fact. That is why we supported NATO leaders in their Rome declaration that the organisation is the essential forum for consultation among its members and the venue for agreement on policies bearing on our security and defence commitments and those of our allies.

Mr. Corbyn: I have been following closely my right hon. Friend's remarks on the defence implications and the development of a defence role for NATO or WEU. Can he tell us precisely where he thinks the threat is coming from and what he thinks that defence organisation will be defending Western Europe against?

Dr. Cunningham: I do not know whether to conclude that my hon. Friend does not think that we should be involved in any defence alliances. If that is the thrust of his intervention, I disagree with him. First, to deal with the question about threat, Europe is threatened by instability in the middle east, in the former Yugoslavia and in the former Soviet Union. We are threatened because, by an accident of history, countries which are unable to deal with the consequences of the break-up of the Soviet Union, either politically or economically, have found that they are major nuclear weapons powers and they do not know how to get out of that circumstance. It is a little wide of the mark to suggest that there are no threats.

If the point of my hon. Friend's intervention was that the old threat—the Warsaw pact and the Soviet Union—no longer exists, I acknowledged that earlier. However, we do not have defence agreements or alliances simply for those reasons. We are regularly urged to intervene in conflicts, as in Somalia and other areas, simply to safeguard humanitarian aid and so we need military forces and alliances. Perhaps those forces will be trained differently and have different roles and objectives, but we will certainly need them for those circumstances. The question is how, and on what basis should the forces be organised?

Before my hon. Friend's, intervention I had said that the decision to establish a NATO rapid reaction force was the result of a realignment of NATO strategy and consequent defence requirements following dramatic international political changes. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the changes in eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Warsaw pact, the NATO policy of flexible response—with the maintenance of large-scale forward defence forces on the central European front—was no longer relevant to the new environment.

The magnitude of the changes was first recognised at Heads of Government level at the Turnberry summit in 1989. The following July, at the NATO London summit, Alliance leaders extended a hand of friendship to eastern Europe.

NATO will inevitably field smaller, restructured active forces, which will need to be highly mobile and versatile so that allied leaders will have maximum flexibility to decide how to respond to a crisis, whatever its nature. Increasingly, it will rely on multinational corps, made up of national units.

NATO's new strategic concept was also influenced by the debate within the European Community on a European defence identity. Nine members of the Community are members of NATO. The creation of the Alliance's new strategy and the negotiations on the new European Community treaty—when defence proved, and continues to prove, to be a sensitive issue—took place simultaneously and have tended to conflict with each other. Perhaps in some circumstances they have delayed each other, but the announcement of a new strategic concept in November 1991 was welcome.

In contrast, the new NATO force structure was quickly announced in May 1991. It has been alleged that that was done partly to pre-empt European Community discussions on separate European forces. I do not know whether that is true but I know that we must make some important decisions about the future development of NATO and WEU and Britain is well-placed, and is indeed obliged, to play a prominent part in those discussions.

Much of the debate about the theory of the treaty and its implications will seem a little dusty to our fellow citizens. Striving, as we are, to reach common ground in the European Community, we currently seem to be suffering several disastrous setbacks. It is difficult to conceive of greater co-operation over foreign, security and defence policies, when apparently we cannot even resolve the implications of the common fisheries policy between ourselves and the French. It does not provide a good

example to either our European Community partners or our citizens as they see what is happening in the fishing war with the French.

It was suggested earlier today that we should send bigger Navy vessels. These days, it seems that, if we send out a Navy vessel, we have to send a few British trawlers to safeguard it. Our Navy vessels do not seem able to look after themselves against the French fishing trawlers. That example shows the worst side of the Community, as the French display their determination to press their national interests in spite of Community agreements—a policy which is to be deplored.

It is important that we should know as quickly as possible the attitude of the new French Government to the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. That is another example where the Community has signally failed to act, not only in our best interests, but in the interests of many other countries, including developing countries.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I have given way to to the hon. Gentleman twice already, and must press on.

We have discussed the determination of the Federal Republic of Germany to force recognition of Croatia on the Community for the worst possible reasons, with disastrous consequences. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) that it is curious that the Federal Republic of Germany was able to get its way against the combined views of, if not all the other 11 members, certainly the majority, but the majority has failed to get its way in respect of the long overdue recognition of Macedonia, which meets all the tests and requirements.

Given the appalling circumstances in the former Yugoslavia, I hope that we will not allow the earlier mistakes to be repeated in terms of the integrity of Macedonia and the safeguarding of its citizens.

Mr. Cash: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there are reports that the French Government are currently keeping their options open over Maastricht? Does he not agree that it would be extremely valuable if they made it clear that only 51 per cent. of the French electorate voted in the election more or less in favour, and only 36 per cent. of them subscribed to the treaty?

Dr. Cunningham: I have heard all that before. The only surprising part of the intervention was that the hon. Gentleman referred to the French Government—I did not think that they had yet been appointed. So far, only the Prime Minister has been appointed, as far as we can tell. I thought that the hon. Gentleman would be rejoicing at the advent of a right-wing Conservative Government in France, although I cannot say that I am. We shall have to see what happens. Certainly the attitude of the French towards those two important issues will be important for the well-being of the Community as a whole, and will provide an important test of whether there will be any hope of achieving in practice the objectives of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

5.45 pm

Dr. Cunningham: No. I must bring my remarks to a conclusion.

In the context of joint common action in the Community, is the Foreign Secretary satisfied that he is receiving all possible support from our Community partners in his campaign—which has the Labour party's complete support—to secure the release of Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright from their unjustified incarceration in Iraq? Are our European Community partners doing all they can to help us?

Are our Community partners doing all they can to help us in the Government's determination—again, they have the Labour party's support—to protect the Kurdish peoples and the Shia Muslims in Iraq from the appalling actions of Saddam Hussein? I intervened in the Foreign Secretary's speech on this issue, and took his reply to mean that there was no change in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Saddam Hussein, sanctions and Iraq. I hope that that was the right conclusion to draw.

As the Foreign Secretary knows, we have been pressing for some time for a variation in the terms of the sanctions, especially in respect of humanitarian aid to the Kurdish people and the Shia Muslims, so that we can take the aid out of the hands and control of Saddam Hussein and direct it towards those people. At an appropriate time, will the Foreign Secretary pursue that issue with his colleagues, both in the Community and the United Nations?

Mr. Winnick: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend's comments about the need to give every possible assistance to the direct victims of Saddam Hussein's policy of terror and repression. I know that my right hon. Friend might believe that I have a prejudice, but does he not agree that the Community's record on Iraq has not been good? Germany played an active role—more active than ours, although it was unfortunate that we played any role at all—in building up Saddam Hussein's war machine, including the installation of gas. Is it not true that, if we had initially relied on a common foreign policy to combat the criminal aggression of Saddam Hussein towards Kuwait in 1990, we would never have ended the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait?

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend raises several issues. First, I am not sure, sadly, that the Germans did play a worse role than the British in creating Saddam Hussein's war machine. Given what I now know about the supergun affair and Matrix Churchill, I am not sure whether our record is better or more admirable than the Germans'.

The point that my hon. Friend raises about the European Community common foreign policy is one of the four points agreed for the agenda on arms control and the common approach to it throughout the Community. That is one of the reasons why that policy has my strong support. We should learn the lessons of creating monster war machines that end up in the hands of murderous villains like Saddam Hussein. We should learn the lessons together and act together in future to prevent a repetition.

I have a criticism of Her Majesty's Government's attitude to a nuclear test ban treaty. France—one of our Community partners—Russia, and the United States of America have already announced their participation in a moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons. Of the five major nuclear powers, only Britain and China have opposed a complete test ban agreement. No further testing

[Dr. Cunningham]

is necessary for either defence or scientific reasons. Whatever further work needs to be done could be adequately conducted under laboratory conditions. That conclusion has widespread support in the scientific community in this country and elsewhere, including the United States of America.

Why does not the Foreign Secretary make one of the tests of a common foreign policy and security approach in the Comunity the adoption of a nuclear test ban treaty? If agreed, it would not only be a big step along the way to promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons—one of the objectives—but a vital step towards the successful renegotiation of the non-proliferation treaty, which is due for renewal in 1995. It would be an excellent test for common action in the Community, especially as there are only two nuclear weapons powers among the Community members.

I hope that the Foreign Secretary will use his undoubted skill and experience to seek better co-operation in the Community on all the issues I have raised, especially the last one.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Let me begin by associating myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), and issuing a mild rebuke to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I think it a pity that my right hon. Friend and the right hon. Gentleman spoke so early in the debate; it would have been better if they had summed up after others had spoken. As a rule, the arrangement has much to commend it. I realise that they will be able to speak later, and they may well do so; but I wanted to make the point.

I agreed with much of what was said by both the right hon. Member for Copeland and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I was slightly surprised, however, that neither picked up one of the points made last week, in a shrewd and perceptive speech, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). He spoke of China's emergence into enormous economic strength, and pointed out that in the next century the balance of power would effectively move from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

That, more than anything else, is a reason for European cohesion and co-operation, and that above all makes me an enthusiastic supporter of my right hon. Friend. I believe that it is in all our interests for the nations of Europe—with the nations of the present Community at the centre—to work closely together. I do not believe that they should sacrifice their individual sovereignty—none of us thinks that, and both my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and the Foreign Secretary have consistently made the point—but I feel that we should all work together, for the good of everyone.

During the first general election in which I played any part—the 1959 election—I acted as ADC to the candidate in Grimsby, Lincolnshire. That was the famous Macmillan election, which began with a television broadcast featuring Eisenhower and Macmillan looking at the globe. The recruitment of Eisenhower to aid his election prospects was, perhaps, a slightly unscrupulous use of a foreign visitor by the old wizard Macmillan, but it was nevertheless extremely effective. The slogan that emerged from that meeting rather dominated the election, certainly in our part of the world: it was "peace and prosperity".

Two aims that concern all whom we represent—and, indeed, everyone in the European Community—are the ability to live in peace and the existence, or at least the prospect, of prosperity. I believe that we shall be better able to achieve that if we work together within the Community.

Mr. Allason: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cormack: I will do so later, but I want to develop my arguments first.

One of the amendments strikes at the heart of what many of my hon. Friends who call themselves Euro-sceptics constantly advance as a powerful argument. I agree with that argument, which holds that we need a broader and wider Europe. One of the most significant features of the Maastricht treaty is the fact that it allows for an expanding Europe and an expanding Community. Already Finland, Sweden and Norway are ready to join, and I hope that they will do so. I hope even more that, before the end of the decade, the newly independent nations of eastern and central Europe will also be able to join.

I believe that it will be possible to achieve de Gaulle's Europe—extending from the Atlantic to the Urals—in our lifetime. It will not be a tightly centralised, monolithic, federalist Europe; it will be a Europe of diversity, and of strength through diversity. A Europe working in co-operation, however, would have a much greater chance of being a peaceful Europe than would a fragmented Europe.

I do not really understand the purpose of amendment No. 227. It proposes the deletion of article 238, which governs entry into association agreements. That would make it more difficult for us to offer co-operation and participation to the nations of eastern Europe: it therefore stands in the way of our achieving the very goal that non-federalist Europeans such as myself want to achieve. I do not think that it is very sensible.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the right hon. Member for Copeland and others have mentioned some of the events in Europe that make co-operation so necessary; indeed, they have been mentioned a good deal. We have a fragmented Soviet Union, an enormous area that now includes four nuclear powers. Russia—the great Russian federation—is teetering on the brink of what could be internal upheaval and catastrophe. Was there ever a greater need for cohesion and co-operation among the other European nations? That is brought home to us particularly strongly by what has happened over the past year in the former Yugoslavia.

I make no apology for wanting to say a bit more about that. It has been mentioned by almost every other speaker, and I take a particular interest in the subject. In all my years of involvement in public life, I have never felt a greater sense of sadness and shame than in the past 12 months when witnessing the brutality, repression and appalling atrocities that have been perpetrated, especially in Bosnia. No hon. Member on either side of the Committee can have observed the evacuation of Srebrenica in recent days with anything other than a sense of shock and shame. It is an indictment of our failure, as well as an illustration of our need to work together.

I do not for a moment accuse the Government of not trying to take initiatives; nor do I accuse other European nations of not trying to participate in ending the conflict. Indeed, I pay tribute—I am sure that all other hon. Members will echo my view—to the extraordinary calm and bravery of our own troops who are now in the former Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, as soldiers have told me, it is a shaming experience for United Nations forces—some of them British—to be forced to witness the killing of women and children, and not to have a mandate enabling them to deal with the perpetrators of such atrocious deeds. It is clear beyond serious challenge that most of those deeds are being performed by the Serbs; it is also clear—as has been illustrated by that brave man General Morillon—that, even in the past two or three weeks, there has been bombardment from Serbia. Planes and troops have entered Bosnia from that country.

Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee have talked of the wisdom or otherwise of recognising Bosnia. I accept that the recognition of Bosnia may well have been premature. I was one of those who were anxious for Croatia to be recognised, but I believe that there are differences between the two. None the less, Bosnia was recognised, and from that moment it became an internationally recognised sovereign state.

I believe that there is something fundamentally wrong and flawed in both the international system and our European policies of co-operation and cohesion if, within days of its recognition, a country can be the subject of aggression, and if, for a year following its recognition, it can be the subject of repression, brutality and the appalling horrors of ethnic cleansing, which bring to mind the worst excesses and terrors of the second world war.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does my hon. Friend agree that the root cause of the problem in Yugoslavia is that it is a federal state which believes in ever closer union, in a single institutional framework, in the free movement of peoples, and so on? The same applies to the old USSR. Is it not possible that that is the root cause of some of the problems in Bosnia?

6 pm

Mr. Cormack: No, I do not believe that the analogy which my hon. Friend seeks to draw is either accurate or good. Many of the ingredients in the old Yugoslavia do not apply to the European Community. The same is abundantly true of the former Soviet Union.

The unfolding tragedy of the last year has shown, in very sharp measure, the need for the nations of Europe to work together to preserve the peace. It has also highlighted the fact that we are a long way from having got it right. There is no point in arguing again over the points that some of us made a year or more ago. We felt that, rather than rule out the doctrine of the deterrent, we should make it plain to Serbia that we were prepared to use force. Some of these tragedies could then have been avoided. However, blood has flowed; people are dead. We cannot put the clock back.

I hope and pray that the Vance-Owen plan—which, for all its imperfections, is subscribed to by two of the three parties—will come into effect soon. There will then be a new challenge for both the United Nations and the European Community. Bosnia will not exist as an independent sovereign state merely because three people have signed a piece of paper. It will exist as an independent sovereign state only if there is the will, determination and resolution to ensure that heavy weaponry is not available to the warring factions. Bosnia will exist as an independent sovereign state only if there is a willingness to create either a European Community or United Nations protectorate so that the peace can be kept and so that people who recently lived together can live together again.

Only last week I called on a constituent—a Serbian from Croatia. Living with her are some of her Serbian family members from Bosnia. They told me then, as they told me in the past, that until relatively recently they lived together in friendship and that people intermarried. Theirs was a model of how an ethnic "mix" can work. The day before I called to see her last week, a letter had been smuggled out telling her that one of her relatives, a Serb, had been shot down by Serbs in the streets of the town where they lived. The widow had been refused access to the body, which had lain in the street and had been attacked by dogs. She had not been allowed to bury her husband's body. That is happening in our Europe today. We should take it as a spur to greater action to try to achieve European co-operation and integration.

What is the use of bandying around words such as sovereignty, important though such words are, to people like that? As the right hon. Member for Copeland said, whenever one enters into an international agreement one surrenders some sovereignty. Had we not done that, we should not have gone to war in 1914 or in 1939, and we should not have won the cold war. As the right hon. Gentleman said, that is what collective security is all about.

I believe that out of our European Community it is possible to forge greater collective security, with greater protective power, than our continent has ever enjoyed. I believe, too, that if we do not do that, the messages of impotence that will go out to the territories of the former Soviet Union will be dire indeed. I urge all my right hon. and hon. Friends, whose scepticism I respect and which, to a degree, I share, not to allow themselves to become bogged down in legalistic niceties. I urge them to realise that there is an opportunity to forge a degree of collective security, and that if we opt out of the treaty now and turn our backs on the other 11 nations of the Community, we shall jeopardise that opportunity.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend has frequently had his say. This is the first time that I have intervened in these debates, and, as it may be the last, I want to make the point that we shall jeopardise, to the peril of our children and grandchildren, the opportunity to live in a peaceful Europe. That is why I believe that this is the right course to take. I believe entirely in what the right hon. Member for Copeland and the Foreign Secretary said in their speeches: that we preserve, by insisting upon unanimity —I should vote against it if it did not—our ultimate independent sovereignty, some of which should be pooled in the interests of the future peace, stability and prosperity of Europe.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: For some considerable time the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has been an able advocate of the Bosnian cause. I cannot imagine that any hon. Member who has just listened to him has failed to be deeply impressed by the passion with which he spoke and by the perception that he brought to

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

bear on Bosnia and the fate of the former Yugoslavia. Although I do not think he said so in terms, the hon. Gentleman made what, in my judgment, was one of the most persuasive arguments in support of a common foreign and security policy for the European Community that I have ever had the privilege to hear.

I have no reservations about a common foreign and security policy, nor do I have any reservations about the common defence policy to which, in my judgment, it will inevitably lead. I believe that to be right, for some of the reasons that have been given by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South. Europe needs policies that result in a far greater integration of our attitude towards foreign and security affairs. I believe, too, that the very momentum which will be created by the Maastricht treaty, once signed and ratified, will inevitably bring about that integration. In particular, it will bring about a far greater degree of integration in defence matters. The terms of the treaty may not make that legally inevitable, but I believe that events will necessarily make it so.

I do not for one moment minimise the difficulties involved in the evolution of a common defence policy. If, however, one thinks back over the history of the Community, the fact that matters have been inevitable has not necessarily meant that they have been easy to achieve. Sometimes it appeared that the more inevitable a stage in the development of the Community was, the more the difficulties that stood in the way of the achievement of that objective.

We should consider this issue against the background of the Single European Act and the treaty. They necessarily imply that a greater degree of economic integration will also lead to a much greater degree of political integration. If economic integration leads towards political integration, the inevitable consequence is that we shall require a common foreign policy. If we have a common foreign policy, we shall also need a much greater degree of integration on security matters. One cannot have that, in my judgment, without a common defence policy as well.

The progress will not be institutional; it will not be determined by the passage of the Bill with whose Committee stage we are at present concerned. The progress will necessarily be organic. It seems to me that, if one had wanted to stop this progress, one would have had to take the austere position of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who I see is not with us today. He has had in the past a wholly consistent attitude in these matters and was arguing a long time ago that the mere fact of economic integration contained political implications which, in his judgment, it was improper for the United Kingdom to contemplate.

I believe that when we embarked upon the process of economic integration we established, perhaps not knowingly at the time, a number of objectives. Of those objectives, a common security and foreign policy was certainly one and, for the reasons that I have already given, an inevitable consequence of that would be a common defence policy.

Mr. Cash: The hon. and learned Gentleman is arguing that the institutional arrangements are not really needed and that political integration in both foreign and security policy and defence policy will evolve in an organic way. Why, then, does he think that it is necessary to include these provisions in the treaty? These are international legal obligations. I take it that he agrees that they are a good idea, but his arguments suggest that they are not necessary, so why is he going along with them?

Mr. Campbell: The fault may be one of delivery, or indeed one of comprehension. It would be better perhaps not to speculate on which it is. Let me make it perfectly clear that I believe that the development of a common defence policy, which is hinted at in the terms of the treaty that we are discussing, will be an organic matter. The point that I was endeavouring to convey was that, as soon as we entered into an economic community rather than a free trade area, we set ourselves upon a path towards a much greater degree of political co-operation, and the path of political co-operation, in my judgment, inevitably led to arguments, compelling in themselves, for much greater co-operation in foreign policy, security and, ultimately, defence policy as well.

That was why I cited the example of the hon. Member for Southend, East. He at least saw, as long ago perhaps as the accession of the United Kingdom to the treaty of Rome, that the first economic step contained within it political implications which were objectionable to him. It is a pity that many others who now find this treaty so objectionable were not so minded at the time when the hon. Member for Southend, East foresaw with such clarity what we might be discussing today.

There is another economic argument which, in relation to defence policies, is at least worthy of consideration. It lies somewhat pragmatically in the cost of defence procurement. It is clear that, in order to continue to afford to procure equipment, it will be increasingly necessary to do so on a co-operative basis. The increasingly sophisticated nature of defence equipment makes it extremely expensive.

A country such as ours will therefore find itself facing a choice. Either it will have to go it alone, which will be expensive, perhaps becoming entirely, or substantially, reliant upon the United States of America—and I think that many would see that as politically undesirable and as having adverse economic consequences for the United Kingdom—or it will have to continue to enhance and encourage co-operative projects with our European allies. The more common our procurement becomes, the more easily will joint defence policies be implemented.

6.15 pm

Mr. Spearing: The hon. and learned Gentleman rightly pays a tribute to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). Does he not realise that these views were held by many hon. Members, irrespective of party, and that he is rightly saying what some of us foresaw at that time? In respect of security, does he not agree with me that real security comes from something much deeper than having weapons, and that real security for a community is the ability to have employment and a secure future for one's family and oneself? The Procrustean way in which the European Community operates will probably breed great dissatisfaction and there may well be a problem of internal security, which could produce very ugly and difficult scenes and problems, not least for us in this place.

Mr. Campbell: I was with the hon. Gentleman until he got to Procrustean, and at that point I am afraid that he

lost me—not because I did not understand the meaning of the word, but because from then on he was saying something that I simply could not agree with. It is right that he has been a sceptic, in the genuine sense of the word, about the European Community. If I ought, in generosity, to pay him the same tribute as I paid to the hon. Member for Southend, East, I am very happy to do so. He can claim consistency in that respect at least.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that security does not depend simply on the number of tanks, weapons or men under arms. Security is a much more fundamental issue. Indeed, the more we can satisfy the economic aspirations of the members of the former Warsaw pact, the less we may need to be concerned about the prospect of large-scale immigration. If there are ways of doing this that involve economic assistance to those countries, it could be argued that a Community of 12 might be better able to give that assistance than countries operating on an individual basis, and thus to ensure the security of the former Warsaw pact countries and of ourselves as well.

I will examine this matter for a moment against the background of changing attitudes in the United States of America. It would appear that the new Administration have fixed on a level of 100,000 troops in Europe, but none of us can believe that this number has been set in concrete. The next time the United States budget requires to be trimmed, it cannot be imagined that that number will be sacrosanct. A United States senator of my acquintance said to me not long ago that, if it came to bringing troops home from Europe or preserving a defence installation in his state, there would really be no choice.

It is clear also that the attitude of the new Administration in the United States is to expect Europe and the Europeans to take a bigger share of the responsibility for the defence of Europe. That is not a new concept; we have been talking about burden sharing for the past four or five years. The question that now arises in a very sharp way is how that can best be done, and not just in the short term.

I accept that for the foreseeable future we shall require the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. I accept that the bridge of the Western European Union is a necessary part of the greater responsibility for the defence of Europe which the Europeans will have to take. But we must also on an occasion such as this have some regard for the long term. I believe that in the long term Europe will require to have its own defence policy.

In the debate there has already been reference to the fact that NATO contains not just the United States of America, but Canada as well. It was said that this was a good thing and highly desirable. But we should ask ourselves how many troops the Canadians have in mainland Europe. At the moment there are 1,300, and by the middle of next year they will have none at all and all their bases will be closed. I believe that if there is a change in Government there may be a slight modification to that policy, but the commitment of Canadian resources to Europe is clearly very substantially under review.

The United States of America is increasingly influenced by economic considerations, as the conduct of President Clinton's campaign eloquently demonstrated, and we know that it has embarked upon a fundamental review of its defence commitments. I believe that the United States will remain in NATO and I trust that Canada will continue to play an important part in NATO, but in the long term it is surely right for the European Community to consider how it can best preserve its own security, with that necessary component, among others, of sufficient and adequate defence.

The co-operation to which the Secretary of State referred will, if it is effective, become one of the most compelling arguments for yet closer integration. As the debate has developed, a number of hon. Members have made it clear that they are of the view that title V will lead to an erosion of national sovereignty. The focus of that attack seemed to be on the introduction of joint actions to be taken in areas defined by the Council

"on the basis of the general guidelines from the European Council".

Some interventions demonstrated that hon. Gentlemen were breaching the first canon of the construction of all statutes and treaties—that one must read the document in the round and not extract pieces or proposals to justify one's own position. In particular, it is perfectly clear from paragraph 2 of article J.3 that any single member state can insist that there is no majority voting on a subject, and that all decisions connected with a joint action must be taken by consensus. That is self-evidently the case in paragraph 2 of article J.3 and it necessarily qualifies other parts of the title. To extract parts of the title and seek to allow them to stand alone is to fly in the face of any sensible construction of the provisions of the treaty.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. and learned Gentleman says that we should take the document in the round. In that sense, the document we are discussing, the title as part of the treaty, has an enormous effect on individual countries' policies. For example, under the commmon defence policy, what is the future of Irish neutrality or the non-nuclear defence policy of the Danish Government and people that has already resulted in one no vote in a referendum and that I hope will contribute to a second no vote in a referendum?

Mr. Campbell: I understand the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but I do not understand what point he seeks to make in relation to what I have been saying. At Maastricht, Denmark was able to negotiate and obtain a derogation in relation to certain matters. There is no common defence policy—that is the fundamental mistake in the hon. Gentleman's intervention. The title seeks only to establish a common foreign and security policy. I believe that in due course there will be a common defence policy and the treaty refers to that possibility, but, in relation to the hon. Gentleman's intervention——

Mr. Corbyn: What about the coalition?

Mr. Campbell: The coalition that we have established is based on an accurate reading of the treaty. That seems to be a reasonable coalition, and we should be happy to admit the hon. Gentleman to the coalition were he to satisfy that condition.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the primary rule of interpretation is that one gives the words their plain and ordinary meaning? In any interpretation of article J, is it not clear that the treaty leads us inexorably towards a common foreign policy and a common defence policy?

Mr. Campbell: No; the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. Let me invite him to join the coalition of those who have read the treaty and understand it. I believe that, in political terms, it will lead in due course to a common defence

[Mr. Campbell]

policy, but title V deals only with the matters contained within the treaty. Although it refers to a common defence policy, it does so in a necessarily qualified way and, as a consequence, it cannot be claimed that title V leads inevitably to what the hon. Gentleman is now claiming.

Mr. Marlow: Let us try once again. I tried to raise this question with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, and he managed skilfully to evade the issue. Paragraph 1 of article J.1 states:

"The Union . . . shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy . . . covering all areas of foreign and security policy."

Is that ambiguous or clear?

Mr. Campbell: It is perfectly clear. What is ambiguous in the hon. Gentleman's mind is the extent to which the independence of action of the United Kingdom is prejudiced by signature to the treaty, and in particular to title V. It is perfectly correct that the provision reads in the terms that the hon. Gentleman has elucidated, but he must read article J.3 in its entirety to understand that the United Kingdom has the right to opt out at any stage of any provision of any policy which article J.1 might establish. That is the point for Tory Members.

The title seeks to establish a common foreign and security policy, but it also permits the United Kingdom to opt out of that in every material respect. What are described as joint actions can be taken only on the basis of unanimity if any member of the Community declines to accept them being taken on a majority vote basis. That misunderstanding has run through a remarkable number of interventions, in particular that by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) during the speech of the Foreign Secretary.

Nothing in the treaty would have precluded the United Kingdom from carrying out the operations in the South Atlantic in 1982. Nothing in the treaty would have precluded the United Kingdom from following an interest of its own, separate and divisible from the interests of other members of the European Community, and to represent it as in some way trenching upon that competence is to misunderstand and misrepresent the position.

I have some criticisms of the treaty because I do not believe it goes far enough. We still rely too heavily on the intergovernmental approach. I am not entirely impressed by the notion that the Council remains in these matters the highest authority, that the role of the Commission remains largely unchanged or that the role of the Parliament continues to be limited and is merely to be consulted. I should like the policy to go further and reflect a greater degree of political integration, but this is the only treaty we have. Although I believe that there is an inevitability about that greater integration, none the less we have in the treaty an important step in the right direction.

In the unstable post-cold war world of rising nationalism and ethnic disputes, where once again the boundaries and frontiers of Europe are being redrawn, and not always as a result of peace conferences, the need for further economic integration and for greater political integration should no longer be seen as separate issues. The Maastricht treaty recognises that and looks upon the common foreign and security policy as constituting a basic element of further European union. We should also—and this was hinted at in the speech by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South—recognise that not only do we in the Community have the ability to fashion and form policy commensurate with our economic power and political stability, but we also have obligations.

Stating a moral obligation in the context of foreign affairs does not always evoke a ready response in the listener, but the picture that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South painted of what is happening in Europe, of our impotence and indecision, was a compelling argument for precisely the foreign and security policy which title V seeks to achieve. There is unquestionably an argument that the sometimes quoted observation of Henry Kissinger who said "When I want to speak to Europe, who do I phone?" is still as true as it was when he made it.

The creation of a common defence policy in Europe will be extremely complex and the present double-hatting between NATO and Western European Union may be, in military terms, difficult to manage, and, in political terms, has quite a lot of criticism attached to it. Therefore, in the arrangements that necessarily assume the continued existence of NATO for the foreseeable future, the use of WEU will, in many respects, appear to some to be a short-term solution; but a short-term solution which ought, by itself, to create the circumstances in which a longer-term solution of the kind the title provides for, developed in a way in which I believe it will be, will be extremely advantageous to the people of western Europe.

It is fair to say that I am disappointed that title V does not go as far as I would wish, but I am not all that much disappointed, because I believe that time and the inexorable course of events are substantially in my favour.

6.30 pm

Mr. Sweeney: I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on this set of amendments. When we began this debate last Thurday, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) acknowledged that there is a danger that the distinction between the intergovernmental and Community pillars dealing with foreign affairs may be eroded, since disparate aspects of foreign and security policy are "inextricably woven together."

As the excellent research paper produced by the Library staff puts it,

"it is fiction that foreign and security policies can somehow be compartmentalised."

Obviously, any common market implies some form of co-operation between member nations in certain areas. That the European Economic Community should entail certain common postures on areas of foreign policy has been manifest from the day it was created. I would not attempt to argue otherwise.

However, it is also a fiction that the formulation of a common foreign and security policy can be isolated from Community involvement and preserved in the field of intergovernmental co-operation. There must be a significant overlap between the two. Article 228a is a perfect example of the fact that such linkage between the pillars is anticipated. Another example is article J.11 which furnishes the supposedly intergovernmental pillar in foreign and security policy with largely the same institutional framework for the Commission and European Parliament as that of the European Communities.

As other hon. Members have pointed out, article J.9 states:

"The Commission shall be fully associated with the work carried out in the common foreign and security policy field."

That such links are to be found between the two pillars is unsurprising. Nor is it new. When Ministers argue that much of what is contained in Maastricht's title V already exists in the European political co-operation arrangement, as amended by the Single European Act, they are partly correct.

The Commission already has a role in the formulation of Community co-operation on foreign policy. Indeed the wording of article J.9 must have been lifted from the Single European Act, article 30(3b) of which reads:

"The Commission shall be fully associated with the proceedings of Political Co-operation."

But that is only partly correct, because Maastricht's

"Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy"

go far beyond what was envisaged by the Single European Act. The Single European Act specifies in article 30(1) that the nation states shall

"endeavour jointly to formulate and implement a European foreign policy'.

Such endeavours left considerable discretion to the European nations over which areas would be included within the boundaries of political co-operation.

If you will, the menu was available a la carte. But Maastricht is a set menu and it states in article J.1(1) that

"all areas of foreign and security policy"

are to be covered by the common policy. Maastricht replaces the a la carte conception of European political co-operation, as envisaged in the Single European Act, with an insistence on a common policy which is comprehensive in scope.

I refuse to believe that when, in the Single European Act, we agreed to revisit political co-operation five years on, we envisaged that European political co-operation would evolve into the all-embracing common policy set forth by Maastricht. If we had, I am certain that there would have been far less support for the Single European Act, because it would have implied acquiescence to an irreversible erosion of our national powers.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Member is making a simple and effective point. Is there, or will there be, the additional problem that all those who now wish to join the Community will have to accede to all the terms of the treaty, as the Foreign Secretary said in evidence to the Select Committee on Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs recently, including common foreign and security policy provisions? Some of the applicants have neutrality clauses in their constitutions. I wonder whether there is any derogation related to this treaty for the neutrality clauses in their constitutions. Has the Foreign Secretary explained that? I should welcome some clarification.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Member makes a good point and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will respond to it at the conclusion of the debate.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member is making the case which many of us have made—that whatever the separation in the plans the edifice will not be supported by pillars or buttresses. It will be a whole. Does he agree that one of the major features is the reorganisation of the Commission, together with its directors-general and staff? Is he aware that recently, in the new Commission, Mr. van den Broek has been given responsibility for external policy and political relations and common security policy and enlargement negotiations? He is, in effect, the Commission's foreign secretary. That is a new feature in the system.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Member makes a powerful point. We have Ministers' assurances that the formulation of a common foreign and security policy will be made with the unanimous consent of all the nations and that Britain will be able to block any measure to which it objects. When they say such things, it is clear that they are casting a blind eye on the declaration of voting in matters of common foreign and security policy which are tacked on at the end of the Maastricht treaty. Let me remind hon. Members of what that says:

"The Conference agrees that, with regard to Council decisions requiring unanimity, Member States will, to the extent possible, avoid preventing a unanimous decision where a qualified majority exists in favour of that decision."

Mr. Hurd: It is not Ministers' assurances that provide for unanimity but the treaty. We had long hours of discussion about that and many people wanted majority voting to be the rule in the treaty. That was not agreed. The treaty provides for unanimity. It is absolute, with the exception of the point about the double lock which I went into. I do not know whether my hon. Friend was here at that time. The declaration is a consolation prize. It says "to the extent possible". It is a declaration. The treaty makes it clear how the policy is to be put together. It is to be put together to the extent that there is unanimity. My hon. Friend is perfectly right that I used the same words. There is a case. He is right about the sanctions in article 228a, but, if he reads the article carefully, he will see that it provides that before the Council can move to sanctions and the economic aspect, there has to be a common position, or a position on joint action. That is unanimous.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was right in what he said about Mr. van den Broek. There was a good example this weekend. A troika of Ministers went to Moscow and Mr. van den Broek went with them. If we are considering seriously how we should handle the present situation in Russia, we must accept that it has a political and an economic aspect. That is perfectly orderly. Equally, there is a Community aspect and a policy co-operation aspect, an overlap. What the treaty does for the first time is prevent a steady expansion of Community competence into that overlap by the provisions that I detailed at length for the pillar.

Mr. Sweeney: When I listen to my right hon. Friend, I am momentarily lulled into a false sense of security—*[Interruption.]* I do not want to feel insecure. The provision clearly says:

"Member States will, to the extent possible, avoid preventing a unanimous decision."

What could be clearer than that? Taken in conjunction with the general thrust of title V and the provisions of article J, we are clearly dealing with serious stuff. Article J.1(4) says:

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity."

Mr. Marlow: In an important speech yesterday, one of Europe's foremost statesmen, dealing with the vital subject of what is happening in foreign policy, talked about

"dreams of society that have inspired many good and clever people."

[Mr. Marlow]

One might interpret the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) as representing a dream of society that inspired many good and clever people. But the statesman from whose speech I quoted added:

"When that dream was impossible, it led quickly and inevitably to tyranny."

That speech was made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Sweeney: We know, and are proud of the fact, that Britain lives up to its commitments in the EC more fully than does any other signatory. That is the difficulty about my right hon. Friend's comments. We will abide by the spirit of article J. That will result in our being bound to go along with the formulation of a common foreign policy. The first words could not be clearer:

"A common foreign and security policy is hereby established"

and it goes on to say that it will cover all areas of foreign and security policy. There is no mention of an opt-out for our policy on, say, Hong Kong or the Falklands.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I hesitate to try to persuade the hon. Gentleman, in view of the efforts of the Foreign Secretary, but he must read the treaty as a whole and ascribe to it the language in which it is written. The declaration is an exhortation, an encouragement to people to seek to achieve unanimity. There is no obligation in the declaration. Article J.3(2) makes it clear that there is no obligation on the United Kingdom to fulfil joint action which is arrived at under the provisions unless the United Kingdom is willing to agree that there should be majority voting. Consensus is necessary——

Mr. Spearing: Or pressure.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman refers to pressure. It is political pressure, and it is political pressure which we should be capable of resisting if we thought that it was in our interest to do so.

6.45 pm

Mr. Sweeney: We are reluctant to resist political pressure whenever we are accused of being anti-communautaire. As I said, of all the EC member states, we are the best at obeying the rules of the club. Because I believe that we would obey the rules, I do not want them widened to impose obligations on us, even if they are imposed morally rather than absolutely.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman will accept that Governments, even the present British Government, have foreign policies that vary according to the exigencies of the time and in relation to the way in which world events develop. The fact that one says that one has a foreign policy does not mean that everything in that policy is filled in. Unless there is unanimity in any area of foreign and security policy, it does not become part of the foreign policy of the European Community.

Mr. Sweeney: Once it became policy, we should have an obligation to support it, even if our interests as a nation state were in conflict with it. As I said, we are proud of the fact that Britain lives up to its commitments as a member of the EC. I do not doubt that that will continue to be the case, for our forthright actions, our living up to our word, are a flattering reflection on our national character.

We will not ignore the declaration on voting, even if it is not binding. Ministers must agree with that. For ever saying no will not bring us to the heart of Europe, and an argument adduced by Ministers in support of ratifying the treaty is that we want to be at the heart of Europe. If at any time we disagree with our European partners on progress towards a common foreign policy, we shall undoubtedly be accused of not being at the heart of Europe. I can hear it being said now.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Is not the whole premise of my hon. Friend's argument based on the understanding that every time we have an argument we lose it? Does not history teach us that every time we have had an argument with our European colleagues, we have tended to win it? So the fears that he has, and which seem to run through his whole argument, are based on that false premise.

Mr. Sweeney: What worries me is that the British people, who have shown in successive opinion polls what they think of the treaty, do not seem to be winning the argument with the Government. It ignores political realities to suggest that Britain will oppose all measures supported by a majority of our partners whenever we consider those measures to be against our nation's best interests. Hence, given the intention of the declaration on voting, it is clear that a veto in the area of foreign and security policy will be left to extreme cases, and they would already be covered by the Luxembourg compromise.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I intervene lest my hon. Friend feels somewhat beleaguered. I assure him that there is much support for the spirit of his argument and for the feeling of distrust, perhaps of the political system—possibly distrust of one's political masters, both here and in Europe—to put into fruition the so-called spirit of the treaty. He is right to point out the anomalies that he has described and the fears that he expresses on behalf of many, including many outside this place. If it is any comfort to him, I assure him that he is not alone, not just in the Committee; he has many friends outside as well.

Mr. Sweeney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who, as usual, is forthright and outspoken in support of the British people.

The formulation of a common foreign and security policy implies a severe constraint on our ability to shape our foreign policy in the manner we think best. Article J.2 says:

"Member States shall ensure that their national policies conform to the common positions."

I am not convinced that our European partners interpret that obligation in the cavalier fashion demonstrated by our Ministers. Once we have agreed to pursue a common foreign policy, we may use the veto given by the unanimous voting requirement to block particular policies within an area of the common policy, but our partners would probably consider it a breach of the spirit of the treaty, if not of its letter, to block the development of a common policy for a broad policy field.

Likewise, once a common policy is open to development in all aspects, it is not clear that divergent

national policies may be pursued freely, even in areas where no common policy has yet been devised. Let me cite a case in point.

The second half of article J.5(4) pronounces:

"Member States which are also states of the United Nations Security Council will concert and keep the other Member States fully informed. Member States which are permanent members of the Security Council will, in the execution of their functions, ensure the defence of the positions and the interests of the Union, without prejudice to their responsibilities under the provisions of the United Nations Charter."

In other words, our ability to perform our most important international functions as we see fit is impeded. In the Security Council, we must "concert", or work together, to find and support a common position, always with France and with other nations as necessary when they sit in the Security Council. Will our views always be consistent with theirs? It seems improbable, yet we are given no opt-out from the obligation to concert.

Mr. Hurd: I note the thrust of my hon. Friend's argument. He is abandoning the attempt to prove that the text of the treaty makes any imposition on us. On the whole, Conservative critics have done the same. He is arguing the case for what my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) called political infection. He is saying that, in practice, we would not be able to use the veto which, as a result of our discussion, he and others generally acknowledge exists.

My hon. Friend talks about the Security Council. We are permanent members by virtue of the charter of the United Nations which long antedates the treaty of Rome or any subsequent European instruments. We had a long discussion on that very point, and I tried to explain to the Committee how it works in practice. What now happens in practice will be established by article J.5 of the treaty. We keep our partners informed; we work with them and concert with them. This is without prejudice to our responsibilities under the UN charter. Nothing that we are required to do under the treaty can prejudice the way in which we perform our duties as a permanent member of the Security Council. The only basis on which we are permanent members is the charter. That is light years away from the concept of our giving up to a European seat. We are not. The careful negotiation and formulation of the article to which my hon. Friend refers proves that to be true—it is without prejudice.

Mr. Sweeney: I am certainly not abandoning the argument on the wording of the treaty. I am trying to put it in the context of the overall position of our defence and foreign policy.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sweeney: I should like to make progress, but I shall give way.

Mr. Spearing: As has been said, the Foreign Secretary makes a very appealing case, but is not there a flaw in his argument? He is saying that we are putting in the treaty only what already happens through co-operation. In so doing, will we not lose the chance to use a little less co-operation if we think necessary because the treaty imposes a moral obligation, if nothing else? At the moment, we may give our co-operation and wholehearted consent whereas the treaty could introduce an element of coercion.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Gentleman makes his point very well, but I would go further—it not only could but does introduce an element of coercion. Moreover, through our status as a permanent member, our role in the Security Council is largely being relegated to that of Community spokesman. We can at least take some solace in the fact that the European union will have two vetoes on the Security Council while the United States, Russia and China still have only one each.

I am especially happy to have caught your eye, Mr. Lofthouse, because we have reached the point where we can return to the biggest issue confronting us over Maastricht. The main intent of the Maastricht treaty is to create a European union. That point has been submerged during much of the Committee stage as we have been channelled by the Bill to concentrate on the changes that the treaty on European union makes to the European Economic Community treaty, the treaty of Rome. However, the significant changes that are made to the existing Community treaties are complementary measures undertaken to facilitate the fundamental goal of the creation of the European union. In covering title V, the group of amendments allows the Committee to return to the fundamental question—do we want to be implicated in the creation of a European union?

At the heart of the treaty on European union is the desire to build the political unification of western Europe. That is what the treaty on European union is all about. The common foreign and security policy which we are discussing is part of that. The irrevocable fixing of exchange rates which we discussed last week was another part. European citizenship is yet another part—and the list goes on.

I do not want political union. I do not want the political unification of Community countries, which will be affected by the treaty on European union. I do not believe that most of the British nation want political unification and, in their hearts, I do not believe that most hon. Members want it, either.

Mr. Rogers: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that this country has for many years participated in various international organisations with regard to foreign affairs and defence policy? We are part of NATO and have given up a measure of British sovereignty. We participate in the Western European Union and the United Nations. What is so awful about participating with the same countries in some form of economic union?

Mr. Sweeney: Of course, the hon. Gentleman is right. We have participated in various agreements with other nations, but the treaty of Rome and its subsequent amendments are fundamentally different in nature from NATO and all the other treaties into which this nation has entered, because they involve a surrender of sovereignty. They involve not merely an agreement for a specific period of time, an agreement which can be changed, but a self-perpetuating system with its own court and its own institutions, which grows bigger and more influential all the time.

If we adopt this aspect of the treaty, we shall give entirely the wrong signals to our American partners in NATO. At a time when America is experiencing serious economic problems and has had a change of Government, which is likely to make the United States more isolationist than hitherto, if we set off what is seen as an embryo

[Mr. Sweeney]

European defence bloc, the way will be clear for the United States to begin withdrawing support from NATO. That is my fundamental objection to this part of the treaty.

As I have said, we all agree that some co-ordination of policies is necessary to make the single market work. Let us leave it at that and stick to the present system of European political co-operation as formulated in the Single European Act. Let us say no to political unification, no to title V and no to the common foreign and security policy.

Mr. Mandelson: I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), although, if I were to follow precisely what he said, I should have some difficulty knowing where to start. It will be no surprise to him to learn that I disagree with almost all that he said because we approach the subject from a different standpoint. However, it would be very unfair if, following his speech, mission control at Great College street, run by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), was to recall him or not field him again because he is a perfectly good advertisement for those who share his views. It would be unfair if he were not fielded again.

Other interventions have reflected rather more realistically the obvious scepticism about the ability of the foreign policies of member states to converge. Given the divergence of national interests and the way in which the outlooks and international experiences of nations differ, that is a statement of the obvious. At least we know what we are dealing with, and what our starting point is, when we are dealing with article J and debating this group of amendments. However, a wholly realistic recognition of the state of those divergent interests and of patently obvious differences in national outlook should not weaken our support for the article or divert us in any way from progress in the formulation of the common foreign policy that I should like to see, which is embodied in article J.

7 pm

Different fears were expressed before the Maastricht treaty was negotiated. Some members of the Labour party made the point that attempts to construct a common foreign policy, far from having the beneficial effects that were being advertised, would reduce the ability of member states to act. I do not think that these fears are borne out in the treaty—in its body or in its small print. In the course of the debate today, there have been references to the very careful and pragmatic balance, in the provisions of article J, between the unanimity that is required in formulating policy and what the Foreign Secretary referred to as the double-locked use of qualified majority voting with regard to any joint action that is agreed.

All the time, of course, these provisions and the scope described in article J stay in the domain of respective Governments and within the responsibility of their intergovernmental machinery. Notwithstanding the competence of the Commission, which is properly described in article J, I support the use of intergovernmental machinery, rather than a system whereby these matters would be taken more within the scope of the Commission. This must allay the fears of any reasonable person.

Indeed, having listened with considerable care and interest to the Foreign Secretary's speech, I think that he was beginning to err on the side of caution and thereby damaging our chances of adventure, or at least progress, in these matters. The Foreign Secretary had to play to the audience of his friends behind him, but I believe that that audience was unrepresentative. The right hon. Gentleman erred on the side of caution by failing to give as full a presentation of the article's meaning as I think was justified. The treaty's provisions nudge us on, inch us forward in the development of a common foreign and security policy, as is timely. It also makes much sense to add some legal obligations. I fully recognise that, in article J, an element of legal obligation is added to the good faith and practice that have been adopted since the inception of European political co-operation in 1970 and the adoption of the provisions of the Single European Act 1987.

As is obvious from the debate, however, this is too much for some. There are hon. Members who are patently not open to persuasion about the wisdom of following the course outlined in the treaty. The hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan gave the impression that these people believe that our country's role and status in the world are still such that any number of British gunboats are worth more than the influence of all the states of the European Community acting together. That is simply not an accurate reflection of Britain's current status and power in the world.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, if we should refuse to ratify the treaty, there would be nothing to prevent us from co-operating with our European partners, and therefore nothing to be lost in terms of the collective strength of joint action?

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. We should be falling back on the political co-operation that we have been practising since 1970. I support article J because it strengthens and advances that political co-operation in these fields. I fully understand why the hon. Gentleman does not go along with that. He objects to something that reflects a philosophy relating to all aspects of the Maastricht treaty—that by acting together, by combining our influence, we can be more effective. That is what I support in this context, as in the context of other aspects of the treaty.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I trust that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that what the United Kingdom's gunboats—that is the hon. Gentleman's word; it is not the one that I would use—achieved in the Falkland Islands could have been achieved by the European Community's saying with one voice, "Naughty, naughty, Argentina—move out."

Mr. Mandelson: I do not think that what was achieved could have been achieved in that way. However, I would much more readily have looked to and drawn on the strength of the European Community acting together in support of our action in relation to the Falkland Islands. The hon. Gentleman ought to acknowledge that, within the scope of article J, if we want to act in relation to any future episode as we did in the case of the Falkland Islands, the treaty will not inhibit us.

As has been made clear, some hon. Members fear that greater European integration would fatally compromise our Atlanticist bonds. In expressing that view, those hon. Members ignore the fact that the United States is encouraging that integration as it lessens its own European engagement following the end of the cold war. I am not

one of those who would like to see those bonds broken. I happen to believe that the United Kingdom's links with the United States and the defence arrangements to which we subscribe as a member of NATO are extremely important and entirely necessary. However, I do not think that they will be in any way compromised by greater European integration and the pursuit of a common foreign policy.

There are also some who prefer to focus on the faraway dream of east and west coming together in the form of a united states of Europe. That is a diversion from the co-operation that is possible here and now. In this regard, the view that I express represents the attitude of most members of my generation. To a certain extent, there is a generational split in approaches to these matters, but I do not want to be overly agist.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Mandelson: I make a small point, and I am sorry that I have provoked more interventions.

Mr. Corbyn: I have looked at "Dod's Parliamentary Companion", and I see that my hon. Friend and I are of broadly similar ages, but we may have a different outlook on the matter. If the Maastricht treaty, as proposed, allows Britain to get involved, wrongly in my view, in another Falklands-type adventure and it does not fetter individual action, what is the point of it in achieving a unified foreign policy and why is the provision there at all?

Mr. Mandelson: Because in many circumstances the European Community, acting together through a common policy, would give greater impetus to the foreign policy aims and goals to which we subscribe than we would otherwise be able to support and achieve by acting separately and alone. It is a simple point, and it underpins my approach to these matters. It is most constructive to promote joint action through a common policy among those states between whom co-operation is practical and achievable—that is, member states within the European Community. Generally, international problems are intensified, not alleviated, by the failure of the European Community member states to act together. It is hardly sensible to suggest that incipient chaos—for example, as we see it in eastern Europe and to a much more graphic and immediate extent in Russia—is more likely to be resolved by a looser and less co-ordinated western Europe. The opposite is the case. Member states will always give greater impetus to their policies by working together. That is the simple truth, which is at the heart of the article which we are discussing.

Forging a common foreign policy in Europe does not mean that we should stop promoting British interests abroad, especially in commerce, industry and finance. For that, we need more and better diplomatic representation and freedom to act worldwide in Britain's interests. In saying that, I echo the comments of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) at the end of the Budget debate last week. He described the way in which the foreign and diplomatic service has been decried, demoralised and in many areas decimated by the former occupant of No. 10 Downing street, in wicked alliance with the Treasury.

Obviously, in comparison with more heartrending spending cuts made by the Government, cuts in the foreign service may not seem important. However, they are a false economy and the proposed scaling down of posts should be resisted strongly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. I hope that in due course, if not tonight, he will say that he is prepared to take more to arms in defence of the foreign service of which he is the political head.

What then should be the Community's foreign affairs and security agenda? What should be the priorities for action? Mr. Hans van den Broek, the external political relations Commissioner, suggested in an interview in the *Financial Times* on 8 March that his priorities were negotiating the enlargement of Community membership and involving eastern Europe immediately as much as possible through trade and market access prior to full membership. He also said that he was conducting the Community's role in the former Yugoslavia. That must be welcome. He said that he was trying to put the Community behind Russia's reform effort. We have learned in the past few days of his efforts with the triad of Ministers in Moscow over the weekend.

I have no time to comment on anything but the last activity in relation to Russia. I want to do so briefly, because I had the opportunity of visiting Russia this month on a delegation headed by my noble Friend Lord Healey, under the auspices of the St. Andrew Foundation and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. When one conducts a visit like that using public funds, one should, where possible, report back to the House. I cannot do so at length, and it is difficult to sum up in a few observations the issues posed to Community policy by events in Russia, where not just one but three revolutions are taking place—a political and democratic revolution, an economic revolution and a national revolution, as nationalities within Russia vie for some form of national and self-expression.

7.15 pm

I want to make a few quick points about aid for Russia, which needs to be targeted for specific objectives. The aid should not be bundled across in vast quantities immediately; it can and should be given in tranches. It is wrong for the European contribution to this effort to have been so muted and tardy, and for the leadership to have passed so obviously and so visibly to the United States. I do not decry the commitment of President Clinton, but there are dangers in the United States seeming to be acting alone in offering aid to Russia. It is politically undesirable for President Clinton's domestic constituency and his public for the United States to be presented in such a way that it seems to be acting unilaterally. That is wrong, and will contribute to the erosion of the public support that President Clinton needs for the aid programme which he is promoting. It is also bad from the point of view of the Russian public that aid to Russia seems to take the form of manna from Washington or from the White house.

To rely on the International Monetary Fund and the World bank is also probably wrong. They have slow and cumbersome working methods. In stepping up aid to Russia, we have to base that action much more on direct Government-to-Government aid. It needs to be multilateral. The Japanese will no doubt fall in, but Europe, including Britain, should be fully involved.

Aid should not be seen as a reward for actions taken by the Russian Government, but should be an incentive to encourage desirable actions. An attitude has grown up of,

"Do this and we will reward you." That is the wrong approach. Aid needs to act as an incentive, an enabler or a facilitator.

Mr. Corbyn: In his visit to Russia, did any thought cross my hon. Friend's mind that the headlong rush into a market economy has been a catalyst in the destruction of Russian manufacturing industry, which has in turn created the problem of imported goods and the devaluation of the currency? Does he not think that there is a case for planning in the Russian economy to ensure that such a crisis does not continue?

Mr. Mandelson: My hon. Friend talks about a headlong rush. I assume that it is the speed of the transition that he is objecting to rather than the goal of moving towards a market economy. If it is to be prosperous, it is essential for Russia to move towards a market economy. The sort of market economy that I advocate is a mixed, managed market economy, which has at least been the model in this country in the past and in other western European countries.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I am sure that my hon. Friend has observed that the Russian Government have asked specifically for several billion dollars' worth of aid to help support the social security system in Russia which they cannot finance by themselves, and so the caricature of the current Russian Government as being simply orientated towards laissez-faire market reforms is quite false. One of the best things that the United Kingdom and the European Community could do would be to support that kind of social security programme.

Mr. Mandelson: Of course, our hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) was offering a parody of President Yeltsin's policies and what is happening in Russia, and my hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) therefore makes a good point, certainly about the need for a social welfare system. But an essential condition for any successful transition of the Russian economy is to get things under control and to stabilise the economy. Hyper-inflation is a very real and dangerous threat for Russia at present, and it is imperative to get its central bank and its credit system on a proper footing.

I believe that aid should be used in this way and for this purpose, rather than the way in which state enterprises are presently being financed, by printing money. It would be much better to stop the printing of money and to get the money supply in Russia under control, and, instead, use aid from the West to finance the state enterprises and former state enterprises in Russia.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, may I suggest to him that he is now giving a discourse about the general state of the Russian economy and nation rather than about what we should be discussing, which is the common European policy, its merits or otherwise?

Mr. Mandelson: I am pulled back into order immediately and willingly, Dame Janet. I am only sorry that I did not make it clear that the points that I am making about aid for Russia are entirely in the context of the policy of the European Community and what aid we might promote and develop for that country.

I would just conclude my point by saying that Russian aid means more than money. It must mean know-how and management skills. It must be multilateral, it needs to be in at the ground floor and it needs to be delivered as promised. There could be nothing more dangerous for the situation in Russia than for western countries to make offers that do not subsequently stand up, to say that we will do something and then not do it. It would be very dangerous indeed.

European integration is not just good for trade and economc growth; it supports the essential steps needed for the strengthening of peace and security in Europe and in the world. Those who gleefully point out every occasion when member states fail to act together or are slow to do so are doing the cause of peace and security no favours whatever. It is easy to point out where people fail or where they do not readily or properly come together to act in the most beneficial way, but we should not be gleeful in pointing the finger. We should instead be encouraging action of a different sort, the pooling and combining of the influence of member states in beneficial and profitable ways.

All too often, European sceptics point to the obstacles and illustrate the inadequacy of Europe's response to events and conclude, by taking a great leap in logic, that European co-operation is therefore bound to fail because it has not always been successful in the past. The basic question remains: are the difficulties and tensions described in this debate best met by weaker or stronger co-operation within Europe? Should our response be a resigned shrug or greater efforts to force joint action within the European Community? My strong view is that we should be doing the latter and that we should be combining our influence in a way that maximises our strength and role in the international community rather than weakening and undermining it.

Mr. Marlow: I hope that the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) will forgive me if I do not follow him on his blueprint for Russia. I am rather more concerned about the blueprint that somebody else wishes to impose on the European Community.

We had a lovely speech from the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who speaks for the Liberal party. He suggested that we should look at the treaty in the round. It was as if he were suggesting that the treaty is not really a treaty at all but a pious expression of goodwill or a statement of intent rather than a treaty of 134 detailed clauses and provisions.

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman has never been involved in business, bought a house or had to sign a contract, because if he is as cavalier in doing that as he is when he looks at the treaty, heaven help him.

Mr. Campbell: Before the hon. Gentleman develops this theme, what I said and what he clearly understood me to say was that it is not appropriate to take out of the treaty a phrase, a sentence or a paragraph which suits his argument. He must read the treaty as a whole. That is why

the provisions with regard to unanimity and consensus necessarily qualify those passages in the treaty which he sought to put to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Marlow: I can reassure the hon. and learned Gentleman. I have read the treaty. But I am a little concerned about his saying that one should not take individual items out of the treaty and make deductions therefrom, because he himself has done just that. For example, he referred to paragraph 6 of article J.3, which is the doctrine of imperative need, that

"In cases of imperative need arising from changes in the situation"

individual nation states can take their own action, that there is an opt-out, that it is rather like the Luxembourg compromise where, when vital national interests are at stake, one can take one's own view. I wonder whether the hon. and learned Gentleman believes that the Luxembourg compromise can still be used and, if so, how long he reckons that the doctrine of imperative need will survive all the other provisions of the treaty. If he wants to look at the treaty in the round, may I draw his attention to paragraph 2 of article J.2:

"the Council shall"—

not "may", but "shall"—

"define a common position. Member States shall ensure that their national policies conform to the common positions."

The hon. and learned Gentleman says one thing, the treaty says another.

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose*——

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and then I will give way to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bill Walker: I thank my hon. Friend. I trust that he will bear in mind that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) makes a very good living at being a lawyer in Scotland where he dissects very cleverly, on behalf of many individuals, including companies in which I have an interest, details of such things as treaties like this.

Mr. Marlow: This puts a very interesting complexion on it. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will be more careful when he looks at the treaty in future, because it is legislation. It is the law of the land.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is obviouly at the beginning of a slashing speech, but if he is going to quote extensively from the treaty, I hope that he will quote sentences as a whole. He said, in his slashing way,

"the Council shall define a common position".

"Whenever it deems it necessary" is what the treaty says as a qualifier on that. My hon. Friend will also accept that how it is to define a common position, how it is to define join action and by what procedure is all clearly laid down in the treaty.

Mr. Marlow: As ever, that intervention by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was reasonable and persuasive, as was his speech. Everything that he said in his speech was reassuring. It is as if he was telling us not to worry because nothing would happen, it was all there before, all these powers existed in the Single European Act, there was no difference in the treaty, we had a double lock and everything would be all right. What my right hon. Friend said was masterly and reassuring, but it was not persuasive because those of us who have read the treaty, and read it in all its respects, not just in the common foreign and security policy, know that for every item in the treaty that is reassuring, there is another item, another route through the treaty, which is very far from reassuring and which has a very different impact on the sovereignty and position of the House of Commons and this country. As I said to my right hon. Friend in a previous intervention, article J.1 says:

"The Union . . . shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy . . . covering all areas of foreign and security policy."

It does not say the union might do something about it, or could, or may if it feels like it, if it gets out of bed on the right side. It says that the union "shall" co-operate in every area of foreign and security policy.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not the real weakness of the Government's position the fact that, although they talk about the importance of the veto, the House has a veto over the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, yet my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary says that we must ratify it because if we do not we shall lose influence and power in the European Community? The power of veto to which my right hon. Friend refers is as useless as the power of veto that the House has over the ratification of the treaty. At every stage it would be said that we were behaving in an anti-communautaire fashion, and that we could not do that without losing influence. Is that not the fundamental absurdity of the Government's position?

7.30 pm

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend makes powerfully a point that has been equally powerfully made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney)——

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marlow: Hang on, let me finish.

This is the "heart of Europe" argument again: we must ratify the treaty if we want to be at the heart of Europe, and having done so, and being at the heart of Europe, we then have to accept all the commitments made in the treaty. The treaty says that we "shall" have a common foreign and security policy, so, by jingo, we shall have one.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman is at it again. He is quoting only those parts of the paragraph that suit his argument. The paragraph says:

"The Union and its Member States shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy, governed by the provisions of this Title".

That necessarily means that article J.1(1) is governed by article J.3. The hon. Gentleman is falling into the trap of selecting those parts of the title that suit his argument and disregarding any part that contradicts it. If I may say so, he is behaving like a slick lawyer.

Mr. Marlow: I am almost tempted to say that it takes one to know one, but of course, Dame Janet, I would not say anything like that. The hon. and learned Gentleman makes his point—he has made it before. He says, "This is what I find in the treaty; that is what you find in the treaty.

[Mr. Marlow]

We look at it in different ways. You are taking a selective piece out of the treaty, but my selective piece of the treaty is totally different."

We have had those debates and arguments before. We had them in 1985, over the Single European Act. Many of us asked the Government various questions then, and the Government said, "It does not matter; the Act is simply about the single market. There is no transfer of power." Yet now, who will make the decision on the 48-hour week? Who will make decisions on immigration policy? The Government got it wrong then. I dare say that the hon. and learned Gentleman got it wrong, too—and, by golly, he is getting it wrong now.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend is making trenchant points. I also have the greatest sympathy and agreement with what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) said. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) accept that the very fact that the arrangements will be made under a separate pillar but will, so it is claimed, be subject to international legal obligations will create the most massive confusion? The need for joint action plans could easily arise in the middle of the night. When there is a need to make an immediate decision, the 12 member states will be running around to one another with lawyers, administrators, Foreign Secretaries and Ministers of State—if Ministers of State are still in place—trying to arrive at positions. The idea is absurd. At the moment, at least we can make our own decisions, as we did on the Gulf.

Mr. Marlow: If my hon. Friend is referring to potential bureaucracy and suggesting that a common foreign policy will be an imitation in foreign affairs terms of the common agricultural policy, it is most responsible of him to bring such comparisons to the notice of the Committee. Clearly we must be concerned about such issues.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marlow: In a second.
The hon. and learned Member for Fife, East——

Mr. Campbell: Fife, North-East.

Mr. Marlow: Even more—north and east Fife; I congratulate the hon. and learned Gentleman. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said that he was in favour of co-operation with the other nations of western Europe on foreign and security policy—I presume that that means defence policy; I do not know whether there is a great deal of difference between security policy and defence policy. We are all in favour of that. We all agree that if we have friends and interests in common we want to co-operate with our friends with whom we have those interests in common. But we do not and will not want to do that through the provisions of the treaty. Some of us believe that the treaty does not go about the matter in the right way, and that, rather than helping and making matters better, it will make them worse.

Mr. Spearing: Is it not possible to reconcile the apparent conflict between the hon. Gentleman and the Foreign Secretary on the question of having to have a single policy, but having to arrive at that policy by unanimity, which, as the Foreign Secretary and other hon. Gentlemen have insisted throughout the debate, seems to suggest that there is some sort of lock or safeguard? Rather like article 99, which requires, ultimately, a common system of taxation and so on, and says that that shall be achieved by unanimity, the provision does not remove the obligation, but, by the requirement for unanimity, it forces discussion and a certain amount of compromise and trading, because that is the only way in which unanimity can be reached on the single policy that is mandatory within the text of the treaty.

Mr. Marlow: I take the view that if we commit ourselves to allowing the union to define and implement a common policy covering all areas of foreign and security policy—the treaty says that it "shall" do so—and if we commit ourselves to the declaration, and to being at the heart of Europe, the hon. Gentleman's argument is powerful.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would say —and any sane person would agree with him—that we want to co-operate with our European colleagues on foreign and security policy. I am sure that that is right. I should be happy to co-operate with other European nation states on defence policy and foreign policy and I hope that the co-operation will develop and improve, and one day be greater than it is today. But there are ways of achieving that. Either such things can happen organically or a blueprint can be imposed from above. Organic development, where we take people with us, will work. Informal co-operation, in which different nation states have different views but decide to pool their views and come together on a common policy, will work because there is no coercion and no moral blackmail. But the formal policies set out in the treaty, and the complex procedures for applying them, may well have the opposite effect, trying to lock unwilling partners into a common policy that some people find disagreeable. That will cause stress and distraction, and will weaken the objective that the Foreign Secretary and I share.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I give way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's courtesy. Does he recognise another weakness? There has been a general willingness by most people, including myself, to accept co-operation between European countries—certainly between the countries in the Community. I consider that perfectly logical. However, if the treaty comes into force our suspicion, justified or otherwise, will be that the closer the co-operation, the more likely it is to lead to a type of federal set-up. Therefore, whereas previously we would have taken such co-operation as a matter of course, which would cause no controversy among those of us who oppose the treaty, after the treaty came into force we should be constantly on our guard lest it lead to the dangers to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Marlow: I follow the hon. Gentleman in believing that there will be a feeling, if things go on as they are at the moment, that the treaty is being imposed on an unwilling and reluctant European public by the political elite of the European states that make up the Community. I believe that the problems to which the hon. Gentleman refers will arise. If they do, there will be a great deal of resentment about the way in which the treaty has been put together and about the lack of proper consultation with the people,

especially in this country. At the moment, we do not even have the chance of a referendum. If great issues come out of the treaty which cause great stress and disagreement within the United Kingdom, where people have not even been allowed to have a vote on the subject, I tremble to think of the popular reaction.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary says that it is all different now. He says that previously we had a monolithic European Community, whereas now we have the three pillars. We are now discussing the pillar on foreign and security policy. My right hon. Friend says that the institutional control and management of this pillar is different and that we have more independence. That is all true. However, my right hon. Friend then says that we are winning the argument, that things are coming our way, that everyone now agrees with us and that the powers are coming our way. They are not, are they?

In all the areas and in every area of policy in which the European institutions had power before the treaty, they still have those powers; in the new areas the treaty gives them powers that they did not have before or extends the powers that they had before. The treaty is not rolling back the frontiers of bureaucracy. It is not rolling back the powers of the Commission or of the European Parliament. By the treaty, we are increasing them, especially in this pillar. We are not winning the arguments and we are not gaining ground; we are losing ground to European institutions.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my hon. Friend will find that I have ever said that the treaty of Maastricht would roll back those powers. What I have said in these debates is that it represents a check to the centralisers. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Why? We have been committed for many years under the treaty of Rome and under the Single European Act, as the Opposition and a number of my hon. Friends, although not those who oppose the treaty, have been, to an ever-closer union of peoples. That has not been defined. It is defined in the treaty of Maastricht in a way that makes it absolutely clear that the ever-closer union embraces and can include work together as Governments. That is the novelty and that is why I am justified in saying that the treaty, which is not a perfect treaty but a compromise treaty, represents a check to the centralisers. The centralisers recognise that, which is why they preferred the Dutch draft, which was rejected.

Mr. Marlow: As my right hon. Friend says, the centralisers have not got as much as they wanted. However, my right hon. Friend also says that the treaty is a check to the centralisers. Within the meaning of the English language, to give the centralisers more power than they had before, even though one does not give them as much as they have asked for, is not a check. I see it as a gift to them.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware, as I am, that during the passage of the Single European Act, I kept asking Ministers for a clear definition of what "union" meant. Many of my hon. Friends who voted for the Act did so believing what they were told at the time. They now find that "union" meant what I always believed it meant, which was why I was so concerned about and so opposed to the Single European Act. I did not oppose it because I opposed co-operation in Europe; I did not and do not. I am opposed to tying the United Kingdom and especially the citizens of Scotland, who have another union—the Union that created this Parliament, which is why we understand what union means—to this union. So many misleading things have come about because people have not fully understood what the meaning of "union" is and was.

Mr. Marlow: I shall touch on that subject in a few seconds.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: In answer to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the word "check" only means to slow down? It does not mean to stop. If a policy arises in the European Community—in the union—with which it wants to go ahead, all that the processes will allow us to do is to check it—to say, "Think again." If the Community thinks again and decides to go ahead, nothing in the world will stop it as long as we want to stay part of the European Community, which we have every interest in continuing to do. The point will go on arising. It may be in the Community's interest not to be checked. We shall lose influence and we shall lose power if we insist to the contrary. We shall have exercised our check—"Good night and thank you very much." The issue will go forward as the union wants.

7.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: It is a one-way street with a ratchet in it. There is no turning back and every time we move forward, it becomes part of the acquis communautaire. There is no sign or potential legislation from anywhere to suggest that that will not be the case. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) knows, there will be a conference in 1996 with a view to increasing and enhancing the powers of the treaty. The ratchet will move forward yet again.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary smiles. I point out that his predecessors in 1986, when we discussed the Single European Act, also smiled if people said that it was a one-way street and that we were moving progressively towards a federal Europe. I grant that my right hon. Friend may be right to smile. That may not happen, but the provisions of the treaty and the commitment of the United Kingdom to be at the heart of Europe make it far more likely that it will happen than that it will not happen.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend recall that in 1986, we had a major debate on the Single European Act? Although he may not remember, I raised almost exactly the same point with the then Foreign Secretary, now Lord Howe. In reply, as reported in *Hansard*, he said in effect that I was living in a fantasy world about the prospects of a federal Europe and, furthermore, that these were horror stories for little children which should not be disseminated. Those are exactly the arguments which we are hearing now. We have been proved right. Nobody doubts that the treaty has all the ingredients necessary for a federal state and a central bank. Does my hon. Friend agree that we are being given the same run-around that we were given before?

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend makes his point powerfully. Some say that he is wrong; I do not say that he is wrong. Some say that we have many protections, not least the protection of subsidiarity. If my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wants to say that subsidiarity is important and wants to give proof that subsidiarity will

[Mr. Marlow]

work in this area, as in others, he can cite the 48-hour week. He can tell us that he is quite convinced that under the new procedures of subsidiarity, we in Parliament alone will be able to decide whether there should be a 48-hour week in the United Kingdom. If he can do that, we may take some heart from the fact that the ratchet is moving in the other direction. If not, the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) must stand.

Mr. Rowlands: Should not the Committee have at least one modest objective in obtaining information from the Foreign Secretary? Although the language of the Single European Act, which says that member states

"shall endeavour jointly to formulate and implement a European foreign policy . . . shall take full account of the positions of the other partners . . . shall ensure that common principles and objectives are gradually developed and defined",

is simple and gentle—the language of co-operation—it is to be replaced by the language of article J.1. There is a qualitative difference in the language. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will tell us why one has to move from the Single European Act to this. From a practical point of view, what is the difference between the two types of language?

Mr. Marlow: It is the difference between "may" and "shall". I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has any children. To say to a child, "You may go to bed", is different from saying to a child, "You shall go to bed." There is a great deal of difference in terms of the result one anticipates from using the two different words.

I take two examples from the treaty, one of which I have used already and to which the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has just referred. The kernel of the debate and the basis of a common defence and foreign policy is paragraph 1 of article J.1. There is no ambiguity. It states:

"The Union and its Member States shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy"—

I would prefer to call it a common defence policy because they are much the same—covering not some but

"all areas of common and security policy."

By ratifying the treaty we are committing ourselves to that. Whatever the qualifying phrases, whatever other parts of the treaty say or those that want us to ratify it might say, and whatever little bits of it that they care to select from title V, that is the part which matters supremely and above all else.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When we are told that we may rely on the fact that the other structures mean that no votes will be taken without the agreement of the United Kingdom, should the hon. Gentleman not remind the Committee about the Luxembourg compromise, which he briefly mentioned but did not spell out? Initially, we were told that it was a way to protect our interests, then we were told that it was not in the treaty and then we were told that it was no longer relevant because "We have now moved on." Will the hon. Gentleman underline the fact that occasionally those beautifully presented compromises somehow disappear two or three years down the line?

Mr. Marlow: I think that that is known as the principle of progressive erosion of national powers and it seems to have worked effectively so far.

Mr. Hurd: In answer to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), rather than make a further intervention later, may I say that it is perfectly true that the language of the treaty is more elaborate than the language of the Single European Act. In some ways, that Act has an advantage. I gave examples of the way in which sanctions would be introduced and on the role of political directors, which I think are helpful. I gave examples defining the role of the Commission and showing that it has the right to propose but not a monopoly—excluding the role of the European Court. Those are advantages. They show that co-operation in foreign and security policy is moving in a sensible direction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was also kind enough to give way to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). She mentioned the Luxembourg compromise, but the huge difference is that that is not in the treaty. I do not want to go into an exposition of the strength of that compromise now, but it is not in the treaty——

Mr. Cash: It is not in the treaty.

Mr. Hurd: That is exactly my point—whereas article J.8 is in the treaty and it lays down the only way in which a common foreign and security policy can be constructed. It is very clear—it is in the treaty. That is what I mean. I am not saying that the formulations in the treaty are perfect, but the way in which foreign policy and security co-operation is defined and organised, and the way in which common positions and joint action can be taken, is clearly set out and is a check to those who believe in centralising—that it is inevitable that the Commission should steadily increase its powers on such matters—and to qualified majority voting. It is a check to those ambitions.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend, as always, is a master of reassurance. If he is telling the Committee that we no longer want to be in the heart of Europe, I am sure that the Committee will be reassured. If my right hon. Friend is not saying that, the powers and provisions remain within the treaty. My right hon. Friend said that the Maastricht treaty is an elaboration of the Single European Act and that changing the word "may" to "shall" is an elaboration, but that is not my understanding of the English language.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. Friend is slightly misunderstating the impact of article J in so far as he says that its significance is contained in J.1(1). Has he not omitted article J.1(4), which is far more explicit and states:

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations. The Council shall ensure that these principles are complied with"?

Is that merely elaborate language?

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend forgive me? I shall have a go and then I am sure he can put me right.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: Hang on. Can we have a plastic number system so that we can follow one after the other?

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton has an important point. The Government are committing themselves to forswearing unanimity and going along with majority voting. They are committing themselves to being at the heart of Europe and to wanting a common foreign and security policy. That is the apple of the Government's eye; that is what they want and what they are committed to.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: First, I must give way to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The extract that my hon. and learned Friend for Burton read out states:

"The Council shall ensure that these principles are complied with."

How will the Council do it? Will it have a foreign policy police? What are the provisions to enable the Council to ensure that those activities are carried out? What provisions will ensure that

"The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of mutual solidarity"?

What will happen if we do not do so and if we do not sound enthusiastic? What will the Council do about it? *[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Before anyone continues, there is an undercurrent of conversation and a running commentary from seated positions which I find unacceptable. Also, interventions are becoming longer and that is not acceptable either. They must be shorter and crisper.

Mr. Hurd: I shall intervene for the last time, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North has been very generous.

In reply to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton, those concepts of loyalty and support are for propositions that, by definition, we have already accepted.

Mr. Marlow: We have rehearsed those arguments. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary says that there is no pressure upon us to accept those common policies, but many of us believe that my right hon. Friend is keen to generate common policies, very keen that he should not appear to be obstructive and keen to be enthusiastically at the heart of Europe.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: How can I resist my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)?

Mr. Budgen: Would my hon. Friend like to comment further on the Foreign Secretary's rather patronising remark aboue "elaborate language"? I dare say that in 1815 we might have been patronising about other European nations, but I wonder whether my hon. Friend takes the view that if the other nations of Europe use such elaborate language—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I remind hon. Members about my remarks on running commentaries and private conversations.

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the nations of Europe use that elaborate language we must at least allow them the dignity of assuming that they know the language that they are using? We must not treat them in the way that some head boy of Eton would deal with a little boy who does not really know what he is saying.

Mr. Marlow: One of the problems with language, whether it is elaborate or not, is that the treaty is written in different languages in different countries and we are not sure whether it means the same thing in each country.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend is studying the article that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir. I. Lawrence) read out so clearly and to which the Foreign Secretary said that we were already committed, will he remind the Foreign Secretary that the commitment that we entered into under the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome largely concerned trade? Powers over trade were controlled in Europe. However, as about 80 per cent. of our foreign policy must come from trade, and as the treaty enforces the powers in such a way that it would allow the Community to act upon us, it is very worrying.

Mr. Marlow: As always, my hon. Friend makes his point in his own personal and convincing way.

I am also concerned about article J.1(2), which talks of safeguarding the independence of the union. What does that mean? What is the independence of the union? We are a group of nations that work together on foreign, agricultural and trade policy. Why does the treaty have to mention the union's independence? I would understand if it mentioned interdependence, but not independence.

8 pm

We, as a nation state—as the United Kingdom—are concerned about our independence. Does the treaty mean that the union looks upon itself as a nation state, and its independence must be secured? I do not think that that matter has been touched on or debated. When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary winds up, I should be interested to know what is meant by safeguarding the independence of the union, as it is an important issue.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend know that a paper was submitted to the Conservative manifesto committee shortly before the decision was taken in which the words "independent sovereign states" appeared? Some 40 minutes later, a vote was taken and those words were deleted. I, of course, remonstrated and made the appropriate noises to those involved as I found it an extraordinary state of affairs—and one that I never understood. Now, as I look at the Maastricht treaty and its mention of the independence of the union, I can appreciate exactly what was going on.

Mr. Marlow: I hope that we shall hear more about the independence of the union and what it means, as it is important. The implications are significant, and we should know what they are.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary told us not to worry as we were merely discussing a pillar, and matters would be kept under control. He said that there was a double lock and European institutions would hardly be involved. Article J.5(3) states:

"The Commission shall be fully associated in these tasks."

[Mr. Marlow]

When we look at the earlier part of the article we find those tasks, which include representation of the foreign and defence policies of the union. Does that mean that President Delors, in his fast car, surrounded by a motorcade, will be driving around Europe telling us about European foreign and security policy? Will we see more delusions of grandeur from the jumped-up, tinpot Napoleon who currently runs the Commission?

Mr. Hurd *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: Just in time, my right hon. Friend has decided not to respond to that point.

Mr. Hurd: Because precisely the opposite is provided for under J.5(1) of the treaty, which is deliberately drafted to make it clear that the Commission does not have that role, which is somebody else's.

Mr. Marlow: The presidency certainly has it. The treaty also provides that where the presidency is involved, the Commission shall be fully associated. The Commission is involved not only in the representation, but in the implementation of the foreign and defence policies of the union. Does that mean that it has powers to ensure that the common policies, once agreed, will be applied? What are those powers? Who is giving them? How will they be organised? How will they be constrained?

Article J.6—which is not as significant as article J.5, but none the less is significant—begins:

"The diplomatic and consular missions of the Member States and the Commission".

Apparently, the Commission has diplomatic and consular missions. They are probably to deal with trade and agriculture, and they probably exist at present. However, we should ask whether they should exist and whether they need to exist.

As my right hon. Friend has said, the treaty provides for the presidency to front-up the operations and speak on behalf of everyone else. If the presidency is doing that, why does the Commission need to have all the legations and delegations scattered around the world? Is it because it is trying to build up its power and prestige within Europe? Does it want to build up its influence over and control of European institutions as a whole?

Article J.7 deals with the European Parliament—an institution which has not until now had much power, or a great role or influence within foreign policy, and certainly none within security policy. Article J.7 states:

"The Presidency shall consult the European Parliament".

The Single European Act mentioned informing the European Parliament, but now we must consult it. Is "consult" a more elaborate word than "inform"? I am not sure. I rather take the view that if I consult someone, I ask his or her opinion. If I ask for an opinion and a bona fide opinion is given, I am honour bound to take account of that opinion. If I inform somebody, I just tell them whatever I am going to do and, whether the other person likes it or not, it will happen anyway. Consultation is different from informing.

The European Parliament will also have powers to question and debate, as we have in our Parliament. I am not sure whether, when we question and debate, we influence Ministers in the House, but let us assume that we do. If we have that power, the European Parliament, through the treaty, will gain that power over foreign and security or defence policy. That is not a marginal or trivial issue, as other institutions in the European Community will have massive powers that they did not previously have.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): If my hon. Friend does not know the difference between consult and inform, I shall tell him. If he came to me for a consultation, I would inform him to sit down, stay down and shut up.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend engages in the debate in his usual inimitable fashion—there is no more to say. He certainly would not get a fee for that advice, although he might try to charge one.

Article J.8(3) states:

"the Commission may refer to the Council any question relating to the common foreign and security policy and may submit proposals".

The Commission can initiate, and it is present all the time with its agenda. We are going to elect the—I was going to say something rude—people to the Commission for eight years at a time, which is a long time.

When we consider the slush or cohesion fund, and the fact that southern Europeans want to get money out of the Commission, we realise that the small countries of the European Community are great supporters of the Commission. That is because they look on the Commission as their defender against the major states of Europe. The Commission has an immense amount of power, and is now to be allowed to make proposals on foreign and security policy. Does it sound as though the argument is coming in our direction and things are moving our way? Does it sound as though we are putting a check on the centralisers? It depends on how one considers the matter, but that is not my view.

Article J.9 states:

"The Commission shall be fully associated with the work carried out in the common foreign and security policy field."

The difference between what is stated here and what was stated in the Single European Act is that, under the Act, the Commission was fully associated with common foreign policy, but not with security or defence. The ability to defend one's people, nation and country against outsiders is what nationality and sovereignty are about. Now, the Commission will have powers in that sphere. Is that marginal or small? Should we not worry about it? We are told that it will go away and that it does not matter. We are told that the Maastricht treaty is just a small matter designed to carry out some tiny tidying up of the Single European Act. It is nothing of the sort—it is massive, and it transfers powers to institutions which we have been wary of in the past and have every right—in fact, duty—to be wary of in future.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is common knowledge in Brussels that the Commission never proposes anything unless it is assured of the support of the German Government in Bonn? Therefore, the same will inevitably apply over defence and security. Does my hon. Friend agree that we are to have a German foreign and defence policy, and the German interests will predominate, as is always the case in any sort of federal union where one member state is larger and more powerful than the others?

Mr. Marlow: I am keen to co-operate with other European nation states and other European countries within the European Community in terms of defence and

foreign policies where we share common interests. There is nothing wrong with that, but I am concerned about the structure that we are handing to the centralisers and federalists of Europe.

Article 152 states'

"The Council may request the Commission to undertake studies . . . and . . . submit . . . proposals."

The Council is there, and, if anything needs to be done in regard to foreign and security policy, its secretariat can act. Under article 152, however, the Commission can also be involved: it can act as a civil service. Responsibility is moving from the secretariat to the Commission. When we return to the matter in 1996, no doubt it will have completed that movement: the secretariat will have faded out, and everything will be decided by the Commission. Slowly, slowly—or, perhaps, not so slowly—catchee monkey.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: In a moment.

Mr. Cash: It is about the Commission.

Mr. Marlow: It is all about the Commission, is it not?

According to article 153, the opinions of the Commission shall be taken into account when the rules of procedure are being adopted. This is "committology": the Commission must be asked how it wants matters to be organised and run—in preparation, no doubt, for 1998, when the Commission will push the secretariat to one side. The Commission will be involved in everything; everywhere it will have the opportunity to devise matters in its own interests—in the interests of control from the centre, and in the interests of a federal Europe.

Mr. Cash: Has my hon. Friend noted article 228a, which states:

"The Council shall act by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission"?

Does he appreciate something that is hidden away in the body of the treaty, and not contained in article J? Article 228a also states:

"Where it is provided, in a common position or in a joint action adopted according to the provisions of the Treaty . . . relating to the common foreign and security policy, for an action by the Community to interrupt or to reduce, in part or completely, economic relations with one or more third countries, the Council shall take the necessary urgent measures. The Council shall act by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission."

I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that, when we get into the business of economic relations, not only has the Commission the power of initiation and of making the proposal; action on that proposal is to be taken by qualified majority. This is relevant to the aftermath of the Gulf war, the question of South African sanctions and many other matters. We are bang slap in the middle of an arrangement that allows the Commission the right of proposal, initiative and qualified majority voting. I should like to see the Foreign Secretary or his Minister get out of that one.

Mr. Marlow: I shall not follow my hon. Friend in trying to trap my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but I shall give way to my right hon. Friend if he wishes to intervene.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Will my hon. Friend confirm what has been said by many other hon. Members —that a common position can be arrived at only by unanimity?

Mr. Marlow: For reasons that I understand, my right hon. Friend has not been present for all the debate; but we have been around that track several times. I am sure that he will have an opportunity to read the *Official Report*, and to note that copious answers have been given to the point that he has raised. I am not surprised that he has raised it, for it is about the only strong point that the Government seem to have raised today.

Article 147 is a nice, interesting little article. Which is more important, Dame Janet—the Council or the Commission? I know that you think the Council is more important, but you have been caught out: you are not right. Article 147 states that the Council can be convened by the Commission. If the Commission feels that it wants to present a proposal or take an initiative, it can convene the Council. In that event, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State would have to take his feet off the table, catch a taxi and then an aeroplane and go over to Brussels, because the Council had told him that he must be there. That is what the independence of this country is coming down to. Our foreign policy, our defence policy and our Ministers will be at the beck and call of Mr. Delors and Mr. van den Broek, the Commissioners in Europe.

What have we got? Nothing. Supposedly it is all minor —all small stuff, small fry; it will have no effect. Supposedly we are winning the argument, yet the Commission can summon my right hon. Friend the Minister. It can represent European foreign and security policy, and implement that policy. It has consular missions throughout the world. The European Parliament will be consulted. The Parliament will be able to set up committees of inquiry under article 138c, which gives it the power to do so. If we send troops to the Falkland Islands or do something in Hong Kong, there will be some wretched inquiry in Brussels or Strasbourg to ask why, and my right hon. Friend the Minister will have to traipse meekly across to answer questions in the European Parliament.

8.15 pm

Mr. Budgen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the language that the Foreign Secretary dismisses so grandly as merely the elaborate language of degenerate European nations could be used against us in a thoroughly damaging way, because of the active role of the European Court? We are very fortunate in having a Minister of State who is a great supporter of the European Court, because it is a political court. In the way that we expect of the Whips office, the Minister believes that anything that is in his favour must be constitutionally correct. He sees the European Court as a good political court, because it supports his view. If, on the other hand, the European Court happened to disagree with the Minister, we might find that it all worked very much to our disadvantage.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has made his point. He is a lawyer. I am very fond of my right hon. Friend the Minister——

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: As I am so fond of my right hon. Friend, I shall allow him to intervene.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps my hon. Friend will do the Committee a favour. No doubt he can answer my question: it has been referred to by our hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), whose quotation is bound to be accurate. At what point did my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary use the phrase "the elaborate language of degenerate nation states"?

Mr. Budgen: He did not; he used the word "elaborate".

Mr. Marlow: I think that the word that my hon. Friend is playing with is "elaborate". That is the word used by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I am afraid that I cannot remember everything that my right hon. Friend said; I know that it was all very good stuff, and convincing, but I was not convinced.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I assume that my hon. Friend is confirming that our hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West quoted our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary inaccurately.

Mr. Marlow: I regret that I am unable to do so, as is my right hon. Friend the Minister. I cannot remember everything that has taken place, and my right hon. Friend has not been present throughout the debate. We are both in a certain amount of difficulty.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: Yes, for the last time.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Before my hon. Friend stops talking about the European Court, may I ask whether he was in the House the other day when our right hon. Friend the Minister of State asked when the court last passed a centralising judgment—made a centralising decision? There was a bit of difficulty in answering the question, but that difficulty has now been resolved. Yesterday, the European Court decided, against the national interests of this nation state, that there shall be an equality of pension date. That is totally consistent with European Community policy for the equalisation of retirement date between men and women, and totally against the policy followed by consecutive Governments in this country. Perhaps my hon. Friend will be good enough to ask our mutual and charming right hon. Friend what is now his response to that point, which he raised himself the other day.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend is being a little mischievous. There is a solution in article 3b of the treaty, which deals with subsidiarity. The treaty has not been ratified yet; when it has been ratified, my right hon. Friend will go to the court, taking a copy of the treaty, and will draw a big red line under article 3b. Once the court is appraised of subsidiarity, it will all be all right: all these decisions will be rescinded, and will be given back to national Governments. If my right hon. Friend believes that, he believes in fairies.

We have had a lot of fun. I am sure that everyone has exaggerated the position, as we always do in these debates. The difference of opinion between the Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and a lot of my colleagues and me is that we view the treaty in a slightly different way. The Government had no alternative but to sign the treaty. They want to be at the heart of Europe. Having signed the treaty, the Government are obliged to defend every jot and tittle, every dot and comma of the treaty; otherwise we shall not be at the heart of Europe.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Otherwise, we shall lose influence.

Mr. Marlow: Yes, otherwise we shall lose influence. The Government have to support that which they signed. Although the world has changed, although the treaty was signed 15 months ago, athough the needs of Europe are different now, although the Danes have said no, although the French jolly well nearly said no, although the Germans have not ratified the treaty, although there are problems in eastern Europe and Russia and although we live in a different world, we still, apparently, have got to support this nonsense.

The Government base their case on trust. If we sign and ratify the treaty, it isn't going to happen: don't worry, boys; don't worry about these details; don't worry about the legislation—they won't do it, they can't do it, they haven't done it in the past. Haven't they? What happened with the Single European Act? Is this not an echo, a ghost from 1986 when we were told precisely the same—it doesn't matter, it won't happen? But it did. If we ratify the treaty now, precisely the same will happen again. Look at the text; look at the detail. Put not trust in Jacques Delors, the Commissioner. To do so will mean that we shall be defied and disappointed.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a speech yesterday in which he talked of people having had a dream of society that had inspired many good and clever people. This treaty, I am sure, is a dream that has inspired many good and clever people, but, as he said, as that dream was impossible it led quickly and inevitably to tyranny. And that is what we must avoid.

Mr. Gapes: I shall avoid the temptation to follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). All I would say is that, just because one is paranoid, it does not mean that they are not out to get us. Unfortunately, we have strayed away from the important issues relating to European security, a matter that should feature in our discussions on this part of the Maastricht treaty.

Yesterday, the Clinton Administration announced that it is to reduce the number of its troops in western Europe to 100,000—50,000 fewer than the figure which the Bush Administration had planned. The implications for the future defence and security of Europe are significant. It could be the precursor of further reductions.

In the light of those troop reductions and of the changes in France after the election of a right-wing nationalist Government, we have to consider the implications for the relationship between NATO, the Western European Union and the European Community and the other institutions of European security and defence.

In the spring of 1991, before the Maastricht treaty was adopted, there was controversy about the positions taken by the French Government and the British Government concerning the relationship between the Western European Union, the European Community and NATO. The Foreign Secretary had discussions with his then Italian counterpart, Mr. de Michelis, who now has other things to occupy his time. Six months later, on 4 October, they came up with a joint declaration. Before that, we were told that there was no way in which the British Government would allow the European Community to

have a defence component and that defence and security were to be kept separate. Just as the "F" word was not going to appear, the "D" word also would not appear in the treaty.

The Anglo-Italian paper, published in October 1991, included the following interesting paragraph, paragraph 8. It said that the

"WEU should be entrusted with the task of developing the European dimension in the field of defence. It will develop its role in two complementary directions: as the defence components of the Union and as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the Alliance"—

that is, of NATO.

That was not sufficient for the French. There was quite a lot of controversy. I refer to a report published in *The Independent* on 30 October 1991 in which the then French Foreign Minister, Mr. Dumas, said that there were clear differences between the British and French Governments. He said:

"We talk about the common defence of Europe for Europeans and by Europeans, whereas the British talk about the politics of common defence. It is quite obvious that the Atlantic alliance is at the moment the primary instrument of defence, but that does not prevent the Europeans from thinking about the future of their own security in Europe and for Europe."

In the same article, our Foreign Secretary was quoted as saying:

"We have been trying to probe on this, various answers have been given, but more probing is needed."

The probing went on for a few more weeks. Eventually we came to the position that was adopted in the Maastricht treaty, which has already been quoted extensively. I do not intend to quote the whole of it again. If, however, we compare the Maastricht treaty with what was said in May last year when we debated the Queen's Speech, we find that the Queen's Speech said that the Government

"will aim to develop the Western European Union as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance and the defence component of the European union."

I stress the words "defence component".

According to article J.4 of the Maastricht treaty, paragraph 1 says:

"The common foreign and security policy shall include all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence."

It does not refer to a defence component; it refers to a common defence. The Prime Minister, speaking in the debate on the Queen's Speech, said:

"Increasingly, countries that join the European Community will also join the Western European Union, as the European pillar of a common defence effort; but, if the need ever again arose, it would be through NATO that the members of the WEU would defend themselves. Any European country joining the WEU will still look to NATO —including the American presence in Europe—for its defence."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 50-73.]

There are significant differences between the positions outlined in article J.4 of the Maastricht treaty, the Queen's Speech, the Prime Minister's remarks in May of last year and the position of some important western European countries, including the previous French Government. I have no reason to believe that the new French Government, when formed, will be any more Atlanticist or sympathetic towards an Atlanticist approach than their predecessor.

The other interesting point to note is that the result of the referendum in Denmark led to the conclusions adopted at the Edinburgh meeting on 12 December 1992. In the section on the decision of the Heads of State and Government concerning certain problems raised by Denmark on the treaty of European union, the so-called Danish decision, section C includes the following interesting formulation:

"The Heads of State and Government note that, in response to the invitation from the Western European Union (WEU), Denmark has become an observer to that organisation. They also note that nothing in the Treaty on European Union commits Denmark to become a member of the WEU. Accordingly, Denmark does not participate in the elaboration and the implementation of decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications, but will not prevent the development of a closer co-operation between Member States in this area."

8.30 pm

That raises some interesting questions. What will happen in 1995—it is hoped that it will be in 1995—if Austria, Sweden and Finland, which are neutral countries and not in the WEU, or in NATO, unlike Denmark, join the European Community? Will they wish to and be allowed to join the WEU? If they do not, what will be their position in relation to their status with regard to the European Council when it discusses with whichever country holds the presidency at that time these questions related to foreign security policies?

I have looked very closely at what has been said in recent months by our Government and some other Governments and I am not at all clear as to what that position will be. Perhaps nobody is clear about it. It could be that the reason that they are not clear is that we know that another intergovernmental conference is to be held in 1996. We also know that the 1948 Brussels treaty which established the Western European Union runs out in 1998, after 50 years. Therefore, there is a very uncertain period in the run-up to the intergovernmental conference of 1996 and in relation to what will happen to the WEU in 1998: its relationship to the European ministerial Council and to the European Commission, and, through them, to the Community as a whole.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): It is clear that the hon. Gentleman has looked very carefully into this matter. Does he agree with me that the speech that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made in Berlin in December 1990 is crucial? Would he comment on the points made in that speech, which are particularly germane to the point that he is discussing now?

Mr. Gapes: Unfortunately, I do not have with me a copy of the Foreign Secretary's speech in 1990. I have some other documents, but I did not bring the whole library into the Chamber. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could help me with that.

Mr. Burns: I would assume that, given that the hon. Gentleman is making his speech about the future of the WEU, he would be familiar with my right hon. Friend's speech, in which he discussed the revitalisation of the WEU. Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in and knowledge of the matter, does he agree with my right hon. Friend's thesis?

Mr. Gapes: I am grateful for that clarification. The concept of the revitalisation of the WEU goes back virtually to when it was stillborn at its inception. I can recall the declaration by Genscher, who was then the German Foreign Minister, with the French Foreign Minister of that time, 1984, about revitalisation. There was

[Mr. Gapes]

also the first ever ministerial meeting of defence Ministers, which I believe that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) attended on occasion. The concept of the revitalisation of the WEU is something that many politicians in many different countries have talked about.

The problem with the WEU is that it is a bit like a character from a Pirandello play—it is an organisation seeking a role. It may be that in the Maastricht treaty it has now found a role as a bridge between it and NATO, or, in the French conception, as potentially a replacement for the Atlantic alliance.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because he is using his expertise most excellently in analysing the matter, irrespective of the point of view. I have just received an answer from the Minister of State to a question that I put down today relating to the position of Denmark. I asked which articles of title V were excluded by the Edinburgh decision and he says:

"The position of Denmark agreed at Edinburgh clarifies, though it does not alter, either the text of the treaty of European union or the obligations taken on by those who ratify the treaty. That applies to title V of the treaty as it does to other provisions. At Edinburgh, Heads of Government noted that Denmark does not participate in the elaboration and implementation of decisions and actions of the union which have defence implications."

That may help my hon. Friend. The point is that the obligations are the same even if they do not participate.

Mr. Gapes: I suspect that my hon. Friend is correct in that assessment; no doubt the Minister will intervene if he is not.

Mr. Burns: Given that the hon. Gentleman was commenting on past experiments to try to revitalise the WEU, and given that my right hon. Friend's speech in Berlin in December 1990 put forward a number of options for revitalising the organisation, I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman could tell us which of those options he thinks would not be capable of bringing about the revitalisation that he is discussing.

Mr. Gapes: I will come later in my contribution to my own prescriptions in my own time.

I want to draw attention to the question of enlargement, because it seems to me that there are clearly significant problems if neutrality is seen as being defined in the old way of east-west politics. The previous Swedish Government—and this is taken further by the present Swedish Government—have said that since the cold war is over and the Warsaw pact no longer exists, what have they to be neutral against?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) said earlier, some of us were concerned that enlargement might be stopped because of too rapid a move towards consideration of the questions of common defence and the relationship of the European Community with the Western European Union. Clearly, since the events of November 1989, that has changed. It is now clear that, for the Austrians, the Swedes and, probably, the Finns, just as currently for the Irish, it is no longer an obstacle to their membership of the Community, even to membership of the Community with this close relationship to the WEU.

However, other difficulties could arise, not with European countries, but with the United States.

Mr. Rowlands: As I understand it—I think it was from evidence that the Minister of State and his officials gave to the Select Committee quite recently—no applicant will have the right to derogate, or even to strike the Danish deal, when it applies to join; it will have to accept every obligation under the treaty as it stands.

Mr. Gapes: That is what we were told. It remains to be seen what happens in the negotiations on the detail of the particular countries when they come to join the Community. None of us can predict what will happen over the next two or three years.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Sometimes there is confusion in the minds of hon. Gentlemen as to the difference between a security policy and a defence policy. According to the union treaty, the union does not have a defence policy; it has a security policy and therefore there is no incompatibility with a neutral country assuming the full Maastricht acquis, while remaining neutral. That is perfectly clear.

Mr. Gapes: I am grateful to the Minister for his intervention, although I draw attention to paragraph 1 of article J.4, which talks about

"the eventual framing of a common defence policy which might lead in time to a common defence."

The phrase "might in time" is an interesting concept, but it is in the treaty. Despite the negotiations and the Government saying that they would not allow defence to be included in Maastricht, nevertheless it is there. Perhaps the Minister could explain why.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman, who is knowledgeable about these matters, that those words were carefully chosen, and the Government were party to including them in the treaty. If the hon. Gentleman reads them with great care, as I am sure he has, he will see that I am correct in saying that there is no defence component to the union treaty.

Mr. Gapes: I assure the Minister that I have read the words with care. I should be grateful if I could now develop the rest of my argument.

Mr. Macdonald: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I draw the Minister's attention to paragraph 2 of article J.4, which states:

"The Union requests the Western European Union which is an integral part of the development of the Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications."

So the Western European Union is an integral part of European union.

Mr. Gapes: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention and give way to the Minister.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In seeking to be helpful to the Commmittee, the hon. Gentleman read out the word "requests," which was also a very carefully chosen word. It does not say "instructs"; it says "requests". The Western European Union is free standing from the union.

Mr. Spearing: It is an integral part of it.

Mr. Gapes: I agree with my hon. Friend. I move on to other concerns.

The American Administration, for budget reasons and because of domestic pressures, will be looking to reduce military spending in those places where there are no

members of Congress protecting defence plants and contracts in their own states. It will be looking to make reductions in those parts of the world where they will cause the least possible damage to the United States' internal political consensus. It is therefore quite likely that there will be further reductions in the American military presence in Europe in future.

Britain and other members of the European Community should take care in the debate leading up to the intergovernmental conference in 1996 and the one in 1998 on the future of the Western European Union not to send the wrong signals to the American people and Administration. It would be short-sighted of us if, by our own actions, we precipitated an unnecessarily hasty American withdrawal from Europe.

I do not believe that that is the policy of the current American Administration; it was not the policy of the previous one. The reappointment of Mr. Seitz as the American ambassador is to be welcomed as he clearly understands Britain and British politics and will convey accurate messages to his Government, unlike some of his predecessors.

In discussing the role of the Western European Union as a putative defence component or defence arm of the European Community, we need to be careful that we are not signalling that we are ready for the Americans to withdraw from Europe.

8.45 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Given that the hon. Gentleman is so worried about defence and about sending the wrong signal to the United States, why at the Labour conference did his party continually call for cuts in defence spending? Most recently in the House, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) and many of her colleagues were telling the House to cut £7 billion from defence.

Mr. Gapes: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) some weeks ago in which he made clear the position of the Labour party and pointed out that the cuts being being planned by the present Government and the trend for future years would be in line with the policy that was voted by recent Labour party conference. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman addresses his remarks to defence Ministers rather than to me.

I believe that we need to ensure that western Europe does not give another wrong signal through Euro-Gaullism. There is a danger that the French and British nuclear weapons and their continued development could be perceived as an obstacle to further nuclear arms reductions in the United States, Russia and other countries.

It is regrettable that the British Government have not done more to persuade the Ukrainians to ratify the START 1 and START 2 treaties and to move towards the elimination of the nuclear weapons on their territory. Clearly there are financial reasons; the Ukrainians have no money and are asking for western financial support. The recent visit by President Kravchuk led to certain undertakings and commitments, but what will be more important in terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and its review conference in 1995 will be a firm commitment by Britain to join Russia, France and the United States in a nuclear weapons test moritorium as was called for by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Today the campaign has been launched for a test ban and I hope that the House will have a chance to vote for a British nuclear test ban so that we can join the other countries that want to establish a comprehensive test ban treaty. That would be the best possible way to guarantee the continuation of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the implementation of article 6 of that treaty under which the states with nuclear weapons pledge to act in good faith to secure real measures towards nuclear disarmament.

Our past contributions in global strategic and tactical terms were small, but as the Russian and American arsenal are cut the British and French represent a larger proportion of a smaller total. Therefore, we are potentially important players in negotiations if we choose to be so. If we send the wrong signals, we shall be an impediment to further progress, but if we work for further negotiated and verified disarmament, our role will be crucial to the future not only of our continent but of the whole human race.

Reference has been made in the debate to the role of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. It is interesting that the Maastricht treaty refers to that. I suspect, although I was not a party to the discussions, that the wording in the treaty has far more to do with trying to assuage German concerns about Germany not being a member of the Security Council and with Germany not feeling that it is being given the involvement internationally that its economic and political strength warrants than it has to do with the conspiracy theories about President Delors, about which we heard so much earlier this evening.

Mr. Corbyn: While my hon. Friend is on the subject of the permanent membership of the Security Council of the United Nations, does he not think that this is a good time to put forward proposals for reform of the United Nations so that that body more properly reflects the world's population and its make up and the lack of Security Council permanent representatives from Africa and Latin America?

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I do not think that we can reform the United Nations under this amendment this evening.

Mr. Gapes: I agree with my hon. Friend, Mr Morris, but I will not give in to the temptation to stray into that area.

We need to look at Europe's role in the world collectively. Those people who are opposed to a common foreign and security policy have to answer one question: what is their alternative? Is their alternative, as it seems to be with other opponents of the process of European integration, a return to what has been called national sovereignty? Is national sovereignty in defence, security and international relations something which, when we look back over the centuries of the history of this continent, has brought us lasting peace, harmony, friendship and co-operation? Did it bring us that in the hundred years war, in the thirty years war, in the Franco-German war, in the Crimean war, in world war one or world war two?

[Mr. Gapes]

The arguments for a common foreign and security policy, based on working out a consensus position among the major economic, political and military countries in this continent, are unanswerable.

Mr. Winnick: Is there not a danger of my hon. Friend lightly dismissing the concept of national sovereignty? I am not aware that we have any mandate to do away with national sovereignty or that it is the wish of the people of this country to do anything of the kind. To try to avoid the tragedies that have occurred, and none more so than in the 20th century, in Europe, is it not necessary to make a distinction between co-operation and the federal concept which my hon. Friend seems to be aiming for, where we would not be in a position to decide our own policy?

I remind my hon. Friend of what happened in 1991 over the invasion of Kuwait and the way in which this country and the United States acted decisively against criminal aggression but there was not as much response from the other countries of the Community—at least not from the majority of them.

Mr. Gapes: There is some truth in what my hon. Friend has just said about 1991 but I do not believe that the concept of national sovereignty, as it has been espoused by some hon. Members today, could bring about the kind of international action against aggression that my hon. Friend and I both supported in 1991. The problem with those people who take what I regard as a narrow-minded nationalist opposition to all things European and to all things concerning the European Community and who try to cloak themselves in the phrase of national sovereignty is that they fail to explain how this nationalist position would add to the security of this country. In a world with nuclear weapons, in a world of aircraft, with international environmental disasters and diseases, how on earth can we, on our own, deal with those problems? Some people, it seems, believe that because we are an island—but I gather from Government policy not for long—we will be able to be immune from events in other countries.

The strength of political and economic co-operation in Europe will require co-operation on the security level as well, in the widest sense. By "security", I do not just mean defence. Defence is an important component of security, but we have also to take account of the economic, political, social and environmental aspects of security for our country and our people.

Reference has been made to federalism. I am not a federalist. I believe that the kind of Europe we are creating is a mixture between the confederal and federal. The institution has some federal aspects. I regret that, where we do not have more intergovernmental co-operation, there is a democratic deficit.

I am worried that some aspects of the common foreign and security policy and the home policy are being developed in such a way that there is neither effective scrutiny by nor accountability to the House of Commons nor to the European Parliament. In time it is inevitable that the European Parliament will demand—and I support this—more and more control over decisions taken in the collective name of the European union.

If we believe in true democratic accountability in our Governments, whether it is nationally or internationally, we should support such developments. The House does itself a disservice by not recognising that the European Parliament is an ally rather than an enemy in exercising democratic control over the executives, the civil servants and the Government Ministers. For those reasons, I support the Maastricht treaty, although in my view it is inadequate in the respects to which I have referred.

Mr. Corbyn: My concerns surrounding the foreign policy section of the Maastricht treaty are that I believe that the proposals with which we are presented are designed to enhance the power of the European Commission over the powers of the individual member states without any concurrent increase in the democratic accountability of those organisations. The reason that I make that assertion is that the proposals put forward envisage the establishment of a sort of shadow agency that will be able to make proposals on foreign policy, as has been said today, and that additionally there is no increase in reality in the power of the European Parliament to have any say in what those proposals are, or to call to account the civil servants who will be making those proposals. So there is a transfer of power away from national parliaments towards the European Commission without any consequent increase in democratic accountability.

Mr. Macdonald: While I do not agree with my hon. Friend's interpretation of the treaty, I accept that the Foreign Secretary underplayed its significance, considering, for example, that title I says in article B that the United Kingdom shall be committed

"to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy".

That obligation to frame a common defence policy goes far beyond the sorts of co-operation between international bodies and states to which the Foreign Secretary referred.

9 pm

Mr. Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, which underlines the fact that we are moving towards a common European defence and foreign policy. That being so, one must ask who proposes it, who controls it and what it is for—*[Interruption.]* I have asked that question of my Front Bench—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. If hon. Members do not wish to listen to the hon. Member who has the Floor, I suggest that they stay quiet or leave the Chamber if they want to have a conversation. I wish to hear the hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Morris.

I have expressed some concerns because we live in an era in which, thankfully, the cold war is at an end. Some of us were not particularly enamoured of the cold war, anyway. We now believe that the military expenditure and arms race involved in the cold war resulted in, among other things, massive budget deficits in the United States and the destruction of the Soviet Union.

In the development of the idea of a common European foreign and defence policy, the obvious question is, against whom are we defending western Europe? Where is the external threat, and who is the enemy? I intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who, speaking for the official Opposition, said that the enemy was the instability in the

former Soviet Union, in the former Yugoslavia and in the middle east. Obviously, there is serious instability in those areas.

We cannot deal with the instability in the middle east by pouring arms into every sheikhdom and country in the region and so increase tension, any more than the deployment of large numbers of troops in the former Yugoslavia, awful though the situation is there, will necessarily bring about the resolution of that conflict. So what are all the forces for and what is the purpose behind what we are doing?

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): How could anyone have foreseen the Falklands conflict or the fact that Iraq would invade Kuwait? Such things happen out of the blue, meaning that we must have the protective shield of NATO around us. It would be easy to give in to the hon. Gentleman's argument, but our nation would be left vulnerable, and that would be stupid.

Mr. Corbyn: That was an interesting intervention, because neither event to which the hon. Gentleman referred was within the NATO sphere of influence—nor, we are told, was undertaken by NATO. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that the Falkland Islands are in the southern hemisphere, whereas the NATO sphere of influence is restricted to the northern hemisphere, north of the tropics, and the territory of member states and their dependencies. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was without the NATO sphere of influence, although the hon. Gentleman is on a fair point in that the NATO command structure and intelligence network were used to support the Gulf war effort.

I did not support either of those wars. Indeed, I was active in opposing both, and the subsequent chaos in the middle east, with the poverty and hunger there, hardly testifies to the success of the operation, in which 300,000 people died, or the huge expenditure by the British Exchequer on the Falkland Islands. At some stage, somebody will have to grasp the nettle and decide that such a level of military expenditure is not peace but a long-term armed truce that drains us all of our resources.

I believe that a common European defence and foreign policy will lead to further arms expenditure and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear know-how. We should take such issues extremely seriously. Title V states that the objective of such a policy shall be

"to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union".

What exactly does that mean? Do the "fundamental interests" refer to what is happening in the south Atlantic or to some perceived external threat from a non-member state such as Scandinavia, north Africa or Iceland?

Do they refer to the preservation of what I believe is an extremely unjust world economic order? That is where the development of a common foreign and defence policy will lead to more wars like the Gulf war, which is, happily, behind us, although the peace has yet to come to the people of that region. It will also lead to further interventions in third-world countries which attempt to assert their economic independence from an unfair world economic order. In other words, the north-south element of the agenda must be examined seriously.

It is also important to examine how foreign policy decisions are made. There are many imperfections in the workings of the British constitution: we do not live in a democracy, we do not have an elected head of state or an elected upper Chamber, and we do not have an accountable judiciary. We have only an elected House of Commons, in which the Prime Minister can use the royal prerogative virtually to pass legislation. Indeed, the Government were legally advised that the Maastricht treaty could be passed in that way.

However, there is some accountability for what the Executive are doing in terms of foreign and defence policy. Under the Maastricht treaty, with a common foreign and defence policy, that accountability will not exist. It will not exist in the European Parliament, which can question but not call to account. It will not exist here, because we shall always be told that policy is being made somewhere else.

Article J.1(2) talks of safeguarding

"the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union",

but what does it mean? What are the common values which it is attempting to defend and which the security policy is attempting to underpin? Why is it trying to strengthen the union of the member states? What is the purpose of the various paragraphs of article J.1?

The proposals in article J.1 represent a departure from the usual foreign policy-making and a move towards something new. Article J.1(4) states:

"The Member States shall support the Union's external security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations. The Council shall ensure that these principles are complied with."

That paragraph raises a number of serious questions, and some examples spring to mind.

Earlier today, we talked about what I believe was the premature recognition of Croatia by Germany. It was not an objective foreign policy decision, but a quid pro quo for support for the exchange rate value of the pound against the deutschmark within the ERM. It was also part of a buy-off to enable Britain to opt out of the social chapter at a later stage.

The French have a predilection for military involvement in certain west African countries, on the basis that they have an inalienable right to decide who should be in government in francophone countries. To what extent would we be dragged into approving and supporting such acts? When questioned about that, the Foreign Secretary seems to want to have it both ways. He says that we can undertake these as independent acts, but not in concert with the rest of western Europe. These are serious questions. What is the purpose of this part of the treaty, if it is not to drag us into some kind of unified foreign policy, and therefore a series of military adventures?

The same applies to the foreign policy and constitutional position of individual member states. Ireland voted in a referendum to support the Maastricht treaty. In my view, it did so mistakenly, but that was its right. The Irish people had an opportunity at least to vote on the treaty as a whole. Maastricht undermines fundamentally the principle of neutrality enshrined in the Irish constitution—just as, in my view, it undermines the non-nuclear, or anti-nuclear, parts of Danish foreign policy and the constitution of Denmark. These issues have to be dealt with seriously.

We are told that everything is underpinned by the principle of unanimity in the Council of Ministers in respect of proposals received from the Commission. I am

[Mr. Corbyn]

not sure that it is. The article says that, where there is agreement, there can be majority voting. Let me pose a hypothetical case. If the Commission had proposed, and the Council of Ministers had agreed, that Kuwait should be given support to deal with its problems with Iraq, and if decisions had been made by majority voting, the conduct of that conflict would have been in the hands of a majority in the Council of Ministers, which could have imposed on member states decisions with which they did not agree.

I did not agree with the Gulf war, but I have to say that the proposition I have just posed would have resulted in the dragging of member states and their troops into a conflict over which they no longer had any individual control.

Mr. Dickens: Surely the attack on Iraq was mounted by the United Nations Security Council, and had nothing at all to do with the European Community or NATO. The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. Corbyn: It was not mounted by the Security Council. The United Nations called upon Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, but at no stage were the forces in the Gulf region under United Nations command. Indeed, under the terms of the United States constitution, troops of that country may not go into conflict other than under the control of its commander-in-chief, who is the President.

Let me return to the question of majority voting and the effect that it would have on particular defence and foreign policy initiatives. The Foreign Secretary has heard my comments. If he wishes to intervene, I shall happily give way to enable him to clarify the implications.

Mr. Hurd: Under the treaty, defence policy would not be a matter for this process. It would be a matter, if anything, for the WEU as the defence component of the union.

Mr. Corbyn: So the Western European Union would make decisions about the operation of defence policy. But what about the accountability of forces during the operation of any specific conflict? There must be some very clear control in this field, just as there has to be clear control in the promotion of a common defence or foreign policy.

Article J.2 says:

"Member states shall . . . consult one another within the Council on any matter of foreign or security policy of general interest in order to ensure that their combined influence is exerted as effectively as possible by means of concerted and convergence action.

Whenever it deems necessary, the Council shall define a common position."

It then says:

"Member states shall ensure that their national policies conform to the common positions."

I come back to the examples of the way in which Germany recognised Croatia, the way in which France operates in west Africa, the way in which the British Government operated in the case of the Falklands or the way in which the British Government are so closely tied to the interests of the United States militarily and as a whole. Any person who is seriously concerned about the democratic accountability of institutions and about bringing peace and disarmament to the world ought to be worried by the proposals in this section of the proposed treaty.

9.15 pm

It also has serious implications for membership of the United Nations. I made an intervention earlier in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) about membership of the Security Council; Mr. Morris rightly called me to order because I was going wide of the treaty. There is an important point involved, in that it puts obligations on the two permanent members of the Security Council from western Europe—Britain and France—who have to represent the interests of the western European community as a whole rather than their own individual interests. When there is a conflict, how are those representations to be made?

I come back to the example of the Falklands. There was not agreement throughout western Europe on the attitude of Britain. Sometimes there were abstentions; sometimes no statement was made. How can a member of the Security Council represent two conflicting points of view? Is precedence to be given to the national interest or to the western European interest? These are serious practical problems.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Following the interesting intervention of the Foreign Secretary about the role of the Western European Union, can the hon. Gentleman, perhaps with the help of Ministers, clarify the significance of this simple statement on page 133 of the treaty:

"in order to facilitate the strengthening of WEU's role, the seat of the WEU Council and Secretariat will be transferred to Brussels."

How does the hon. Gentleman think that that will strengthen or facilitate the role of the WEU? Can the Government explain how the WEU will become stronger or more significant simply by moving to Brussels?

Mr. Corbyn: If it is transferred to Brussels, presumably it will be handier for the NATO headquarters and also for the offices of the European Parliament; perhaps more importantly, it will be handier for the Commission itself. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and I may disagree fundamentally on many aspects of foreign policy, but I think that we would both agree on the need for genuine and real accountability for what is done in our name. Transferring power to the Commission or to the Western European Union would not achieve that accountability.

I note that accountability is not transferred to the European Parliament or retained in this Parliament. It just goes off to some place in the middle, and the Commission gets on with what it wishes to do. There are serious problems with that aspect of the treaty.

I should like to mention briefly the curious notion under article J.8.5, which says:

"Without prejudice to Article 151 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, a Political Committee consisting of Political Directors shall monitor the international situation in the areas covered by common foreign and security policy and contribute to the definition of policies by delivering opinions to the Council".

It seems that we are revisiting the whole argument about a European central bank. Many of us have the deepest misgivings about the establishment of such a bank, with no accountability to member states and an office life of eight years, in which it can do what it likes, provided that it supports the market economy throughout Europe, despite

the social consequences. There is no time limit on the period of office of the political directors, and there is nothing about who they would be or where they would come from. But I ask the quite serious question: what on earth are these political directors to do, where do they come from , to whom are they answerable and how do we get rid of them if we do not like what they do?

Mr. Spearing: The questions and their answers illustrate the importance of either getting a reply from the Foreign Secretary before we vote on this matter or perhaps returning to the matter at another stage of the Bill. Can I remind my hon. Friend that, earlier in the debate, the Foreign Secretary said that this directorate and committee was, as it were an extension of the intergovernmental function of the Council, as distinct from, not the opponents but the other wing within the Commission? In that sense, he may be right in seeing a competition between the centralist Commission and the centralist intergovernmental institution. But in either case my hon. Friend is right. They are both central and may be bidding against each other.

Mr. Corbyn: I am not entirely sure how it benefits the people of Europe——

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:

The Committee divided: Ayes 59, Noes 292.

Division No. 217] **[9.20 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Budgen, Nicholas
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Harvey, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCrea, Rev William
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Trimble, David
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Ted Rowlands.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
Macdonald, Calum
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mariand, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Cash: I beg to move amendment No. 230, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 206'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following amendments: No. 237, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 154'.

No. 138, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert 'except Article 29'.

No. 139, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert 'except Article 78c'.

No. 140, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert 'except Article 78g'.

No. 153, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert 'except Article 123'.

No. 154, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert 'except Article 179'.

No. 155, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert 'except Article 180b'.

No. 151, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert
'but not last sentence of paragraph 8 in Article 160b of Title IV thereof'.

Before I call Mr. Cash, may I make it clear that the subject of the amendment is very narrow.

Mr. Cash: Indeed, Mr. Morris, it is a narrow subject but it is a very important amendment.

Amendment No. 230 would exclude article 206 in title II of the treaty. I see that the Paymaster General, who is going to take a close look at these narrow issues, is in his place so I hope that we shall have a reasonably good debate.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend deal with *[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Cash: I am sorry, but I cannot hear my hon. Friend.

The Chairman: Will the hon. Gentleman repeat his intervention?

Mr. Knapman: I asked my hon. Friend whether he would deal with fraud, which seems to come under the subject of internal finance. I appreciate that fraud is a very narrow subject.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) has drawn my attention to that important matter because article 206 falls into three categories. First,

"The European Parliament, acting on a recommendation from the Council which shall act by a qualified majority, shall give a discharge to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the budget."

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud has immediately homed in on the fact that, in order to be able to give the right kind of discharge, it is necessary for the Court of Auditors to——

The Chairman: Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Stroud would understand that he is not able to stand in the Chamber when another hon. Member has the Floor.

Mr. Cash: The giving of that discharge raises the question of the financial system through which the Community functions. Article 206b states that both

"the Council and the European Parliament . . . shall examine the accounts"

and the financial statements and audits. Before giving any such discharge, the European Parliament could ask the Commission to submit evidence and it would be obliged to take appropriate steps to implement any observations that the Parliament might make on expenditure. That begs the essential questions, how much would that extend the Commission's powers and to what extent would the Court of Auditors, which is involved in the process, be capable of arriving at an accurate assessment to determine whether the Commission could give a discharge for a budget?

The Select Committee on European Legislation, of which I am a member, only considered the 1991 budget —the Council's discharge—on 3 March this year. A number of hon. Members will know that there has been

considerable disquiet in the Court of Auditors about the way in which the Community's finances have been operated and sorted out.

I have the Court of Auditors' report. It is well known that Mr. Carey, who has recently been an extremely eminent member of the Court of Auditors, has been exceedingly critical of the manner in which the powers of the Court of Auditors have been operating and, I think, would operate, even today. There is a good reason for that, and much of it is contained in the excellent report. When somebody of Mr. Carey's distinction, who has inside knowledge of the Community's finances, makes the sort of criticism contained in the report, we have every reason to be deeply worried about the basis on which the discharges of the budget are being conducted.

The Select Committee has the power to refer matters either to the European Standing Committee or the House as a whole. When faced with a report and a discharge that raises matters of profound political or legal importance, we have the power to recommend that the matter should be dealt with on the Floor of the House. In the most recent Select Committee meeting on 3 March, it was decided that the draft Council recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge to be given to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Community for the financial year 1991 should be further considered by the House rather than by European Standing Committee B. That gives the clue to the difficulty raised by the discharge for last year.

A difficult question arose on the financial management, value for money and evaluation in respect of Community funds, and the need for member states to assume their responsibilities more fully.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, THE CHAIRMAN, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The Committee divided: *Ayes 2, Noes 327.*

Division No. 218] **[9.35 pm**

AYES

Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Harry
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William

MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Cash: Before that interruption, Mr. Morris, I was dealing with article 206 of the treaty and explaining why I thought that it was unnecessary and undesirable for it to be included. I had drawn attention to the fact that the European Select Committee——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. These amendments are extremely tricky and very detailed. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has a great grasp of the amendments which he has tabled. Would it be possible for you to ask right hon. and hon. Members to withdraw so that those of us who are interested in this group of amendments can hear the debate?

The Chairman: It could be the trickiness of the amendments that is causing hon. Members to discuss them. I hope very much that they will now listen to these very narrowly drawn amendments.

Mr. Cash: As I was saying, the Select Committee on European Legislation decided on 3 March that the discharge of the Commission's budget for 1991 was of such importance that it should be discussed on the Floor of the House—that is, here; that hon. Members needed to debate the matter because of the manner in which taxpayers' money was being dispensed, and that the whole basis upon which the fraud is perpetrated in the Community needed to be discussed by hon. Members in the House.

I have to say that the Committee and the Treasury were not particularly enthusiastic about much of what they came across when they looked at what is in this document, which, although the subject is narrow, has a very wide ambit—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Most of these people here may not want to hear my hon. Friend, but I do, and I cannot.

The Chairman: Order. Hon. Members must remember that there are no "these people"; there are only hon. Members in this Committee. There are three minutes until the 10 o'clock motion, so may we please listen to the hon. Member?

Mr. Cash: The Court of Auditors has some very powerful indictments, very powerful criticisms, of the way in which the European Community has been running its affairs. I notice that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is present and I hope that, in his capacity as a Minister of the Crown, he has been paying special attention to the fraud which is being perpetrated in the European Community and for which the British taxpayer is paying. I will give a number of reasons why I believe that the discharge of the budget for 1991 demonstrates that this whole exercise is a travesty of accountancy and fraud.

The court noted that its observations arise from errors and mis-statements commonly resulting from inadequately drafted legislation and from organisational failures which mean that the errors themselves cannot even be detected. So the taxpayers do not even have the redress that the Court of Auditors can provide because the legislation is so inadequate and sloppy.

I see that the Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation is in his place. He knows, as do other members of the Select Committee, exactly what is going on in the Community. The Community is run on the taxpayer, but in the most inefficient and negligent manner and the Court of Auditors is doing all it can to improve that position.

In particular, the court says that more progress needs to be made to make the reform of the structural funds——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).

That, at this day's sitting, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 299.

Division No. 219] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Roe'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Sir George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Again considered in Committee.
Question proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. At the beginning of our deliberations, the Prime Minister promised the House that we should have every opportunity to debate the Bill, line by line, in a Committee of the whole House. I put it to you, Mr. Morris, that if the Government are to force it through with all-night sittings and are able to do so only with the support of the Liberals, that is a sickening abuse of the procedures of the House.

The Jopling report, which is to be debated, emphasised that we should not debate after 10 pm. What logic is there in discussing issues of this importance through the night, especially when we do so only because of the treacherous Liberals?

The Chairman: The House has made its decision.

Mr. Cash: Before the vote, I made it clear that a number of important matters affected the taxpayers of this country who are discovering for themselves that the fraud that has been perpetrated in the European Community has been growing. I said that it was increasingly difficult for judgments to be made by the court, which identified two main reasons for deficiencies in financial management and control.

The first is inadequate drafting of legislation. For example, there may be a failure to specify adequate control arrangements, as with certain aid programmes or objectives and with structural fund training measures. Alternatively, it is said that the nature and purpose of support may not be easily amenable to control, as is the case with certain argicultural price compensation aids.

Secondly—*[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly and quickly?

Mr. Cash: Secondly, it is said that there may be organisational deficiencies leading to errors or irregularities, which may not be detected or corrected. In the court's view, such problems with financial management, affecting the accounting and control of European Community finances, occur both in the Commission and in the member states, and the Commission has not checked sufficiently that national accounting and control arrangements for revenue and expenditure are adequate. What we have here is an indictment not only of the Commission but of the member states themselves. The finances of the European Community are in dire straits. The money of taxpayers is being thrown away.

Mr. Ian Taylor: In view of my hon. Friend's concern about the way in which money is spent, may I ask him why he does not welcome the Maastricht treaty's provisions for the installation of the Court of Auditors as a full institution of the Community, as well as the increased powers of the European Parliament in respect of the Commission?

Mr. Cash: The very simple answer is that it should not be within the competence of the European Parliament in particular to deal with matters that are the concern of the electors and taxpayers of this nation. Such matters properly fall to be decided by the House of Commons.

Mr. Taylor: We, too, could do that.

Mr. Cash: What an extraordinary thing to say. If we were to operate on the basis that everything decided here should be decided also in the European Parliament, there would be different reports from different institutions. We should have double jeopardy and the recycling of money, and nothing would be achieved. Half the trouble that we experience arises from the fact that there is not a sufficiently clear distinction between the functions of the House of Commons and the functions of the European Parliament. What my hon. Friend suggests would create even more confusion.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware of the number of auditors' reports that have exposed appalling fraud in the budgets of the European Community. Does he know that when this country held the presidency of the Council of Ministers our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer —no less—attempted, time and again, to raise this matter? The Chancellor himself told me that as soon as he tried to expose the fraud, the other delegates took up their newspapers. That is how much they cared about fraud in the European Community.

Mr. Cash: Indeed, and when the Select Committee on European Legislation visited the Court of Auditors it was given a very clear, verbatim account of the amount of fraud being perpetrated in the Community. The fact that Mr. Carey has been so critical of the present arrangements indicates that he does not believe that even what is proposed in this treaty would solve the problem. The real question is whether we shall be able to achieve a proper degree of control. The House of Commons has the Public Accounts Committee, the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Comptroller and Auditor General. A system that has been well established over centuries keeps proper control of our finances so far as is conceivably possible.

I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir. P. Hordern) is getting to his feet. This may be his first intervention in these debates, so I look forward to hearing what he has to say. I gladly give way.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): My hon. Friend is describing accurately the faults brought out by the European Court of Auditors and the faults that are inherent in the Single European Act which I believe he supported. He is right that there is no mechanism for putting these faults right. In the Maastricht treaty there are provisions for examination by the European Parliament of the European Commission. Surely that must be a significant advance over the position which my hon. Friend so accurately criticises. I cannot understand how he can object to the provisions in the Maastricht treaty that allow for some improvement in the position.

I tell my hon. Friend this in case he did not know the Comptroller and Auditor General himself, as well as some hon. Members, contributed to the effort to get the improvement. My hon. Friend ought at least to acknowledge the significant improvement which has been obtained in the treaty.

Mr. Cash: Irrespective of whether we want an improvement in the manner in which the finances of the Community are scrutinised and in relation to the discharge of the budget of the Commission, I still maintain that the

[Mr. Cash]

real question, which lies at the heart of this issue, is the division of functions. An increasing volume of activity is being transferred. New competences, including the structural fund, are being transferred. I see that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is unsure about it. I must ask him how we got ourselves into the position 18 months ago of agreeing an illegal budget retrospectively. I hope that he will respond, because that was a monstrous state of affairs. When such circumstances arise, hon. Members are entitled to ask what will happen with all the increased competences of the European Parliament and the Community institutions.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend reflect for a moment on the well-researched observations of my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) who has been a distinguished member of the Public Accounts Committee for a long time and who has given much thought to this matter? However, my right hon. Friend will not face up to two facts. First, many of the countries of the EEC are conniving at fraud. There is clear evidence that Italian Governments have from time to time connived at fraud, particularly in the agricultural sector. Secondly, the only way in which fraud could be rooted out would be to finalise the arrangements by which the EEC had the appurtenances of a single state—that it was given its own police authority and its own enforcement authority. Otherwise, it is inevitable that nation states, particularly where they condone fraud, will simply frustrate the inquiries of the Court of Auditors.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. This is a lengthy intervention.

Mr. Cash: It may have been lengthy, but it was important and accurate. I can give chapter and verse to illustrate the very point that my hon. Friend has made. Paragraph 11.10 on page 181 of the report of the Court of Auditors says:

"Implementation of the Community legislation is rendered more difficult by the absence, in particular, in the Greek and Portuguese regions visited by the Court, of a viticultural land register or official plan of parcels. The vineyards are identified by a mere indication of their surface area and by vague references to their limits (names of the owners of neighbouring plots or topographical details: roads or water courses). It was for this reason that, in 1986, the Community decided to finance the establishment by the Member States of a vineyard register which would make it possible to identify, on a permanent basis, the vineyards belonging to each holding."

I give the next few words with deep regret:

"However, work on the setting up of this vineyard register —which, according to the legislation, was to have been completed by 31 July 1992 in Spain and Greece and should be completed by 31 December 1995 in Portugal—is progressing slowly and, at the time of the Court's visit, had not resulted in any kind of improvement of the instruments for controlling the measures financed by the EAGGF Guidance Section."

10.30 pm

That is one example of what is going on. I would be quite astonished to read this in the Court of Auditors' report for last year were it not for the fact that I took part in a debate on the Court of Auditors' report four or so years ago, and I find that almost exactly the same kind of criticisms are being made now as were being made then. So why should I take the blindest notice of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham says when he suggests that we should go hell for leather down this route, accepting all these spurious claims that they will improve matters, when it is quite clear on the evidence that it will not happen? What some hon. Members will not and cannot understand is that the problems that are inherent in this treaty, difficulties that are inherent in trying to solve problems on pieces of paper, have no regard to the inherent corruption and veniality of many of the agriculturalists in other member states. I say that, I am afraid, with bags of evidence to support it. If hon. Members want to challenge me, I will take most of the night reading out the examples set out in this document.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way again. It is most generous of him. Taking his encyclopaedic knowledge of the report of the Court of Auditors, can he tell me if it has anything to say about the very fine line between expenses and corruption? For example, does it give us the price of the jet which Mr. Delors has at his disposal and which has "EC President" on the side, or of the fleet of stretch limousines which travel everywhere with him—Citroens, of course—covered in flags and all transported at the expense of the value added tax money which is collected and is about to be swollen by tax on fuel which will be charged to pensioners in this country? Does it say anything about that in the report?

Mr. Cash: I am sure that there are items which, one way and another, have not made their way into this report for reasons of sensitivity. As we are now moving towards what appears to be—over our dead bodies, as it were—a federal state, I have no doubt that an official secrets Act will be brought in to complement all this and to make sure that we cannot get access to that kind of information.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Seriously, could my hon. Friend remind our right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham that there is little point in adding yet another fraud investigation body, this time for the European Parliament, if we add, as we are doing in this treaty, massive new spending and responsibilities for the EC, based on artificial prices which are an economic nonsense? There is no way in which one could stop fraud, even if one were to set up a thousand departments and give them a thousand Citroens in which to travel round, looking for trouble.

Mr. Cash: Indeed, and the iniquity of the common agricultural policy, the iron hoof of monopoly, is well known to those who have studied the problems of the corn laws and the rest of it, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham, whose affection for Cobden is matched only by my affection for John Bright. I suspect that Richard Cobden would be absolutely appalled at the way in which this monopoly arrangement in the common agricultural policy is being operated, because there is very little distinction between the degree of moral corruption that lies at the heart of the way the CAP is operated—I say that not merely as a generalisation but on the evidence that I can produce—between the common agricultural policy and the corn laws of the 19th century, particularly in their impact on the third world. The Court of Auditors makes some stringent criticisms of the way in which European Community finances impinge on poverty-stricken people in the third world.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cash: I shall be glad to give way to my hon. and learned Friend.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: As my hon. Friend paused for a moment, I could not stop myself asking him whether he recalled an incident that I may have told him about in the past, involving a company in Burton that had an unsatisfactory experience when it went to Italy and tried to buy a company there. The Burton company's representatives were presented with one set of books for the shareholder, another set for the would-be purchasers and a third set for the taxman. Some planes were revving up nearby, loaded with cases of cash about to be spirited away to Switzerland. That Italian company was supposed to be reputable, and a most reputable company from my constituency had intended to take it over. I need hardly add that we would not touch it—any more than we ought to touch the financial arrangements that are to be forced down our throats as a result of Maastricht.

Mr. Cash: Indeed. I assure my hon. and learned Friend that I shall not be spirited away to Switzerland, at least in the immediate future, and certainly not before the end of the debate. I am fascinated to hear of the example that he cites, because it is matched by our experience. Many such Fred Karno examples and Crazy Gang incidents pour out of the reports of the Court of Auditors. However, at the heart of it all lies a serious tragedy: for every person who gains massively as a result of the frauds, which are organised on a massive scale and run into billions of pounds, there are other people in the Community who can hardly scratch together enough money to buy themselves a decent pair of shoes or set of clothing. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) does not seem to think that that is true. Perhaps there are no poor people in his constituency who could well do with the money that is ripped off from the system.

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Gentleman is talking about poverty, he should acknowledge that poverty in this country has increased enormously under the Tory Government. If he is talking about cheating and fraud within the European Community, he must also readily admit that the Court of Auditors and the other Community institutions do their utmost to prevent them.

Mr. Cash: That is the whole problem, if I may say so. I have great affection for the hon. Gentleman, so I withdraw any suggestion that he may be attempting to look two ways at once. But it is wrong for him to suggest that we should not criticise the basis upon which the internal finances operate.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not say that.

Mr. Cash: I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we should give the matter careful consideration. The evidence suggests that nothing has been done and, on the basis of the arguments that I have presented and will continue to present, I do not believe that anything much will be done.

Let me take another example to which the Court of Auditors referred.

Mr. Skinner: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that, although so much fraud is going on in the Common Market, the Tory Ministers who go across there are not taking up the complaints about it? Ministers go across and discuss things with their opposite numbers at the Council of Ministers. Leon Brittan is there, too. He is a Tory; what is he doing about it? I find it odd that Tory Ministers accept that massive fraud, yet hammer Lambeth Labour councillors whose only crime was to try to improve standards for their constituents. My brothers and their friends at Clay Cross were done by the Tories, too. Why is there one standard for Labour councillors and another for all those who are engaged in fraud in the Common Market? Why are Tory Ministers turning a blind eye to all the corruption and fraud about which the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is talking when they hammer, surcharge and kick out of office people in Britain?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman will not take me down the route of criticising Tory or Conservative Members or ex-Members. I reserve my criticism for those who espouse federalism and all its works and pomps. Criticisms can be levied against those who want to take us down this iniquitous, fraudulent route, but not against Tory Members because we know our principles on these matters. We insist on having proper scrutiny of the finances of the Community.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Is not the truth of the matter that we are criticising not necessarily political parties or personalities, but the absurdity of the system? In a nation that has prided itself on being honest and efficient in the way in which it conducts its civil life, our taxpayers are being hugely penalised for no other reason than that we are far more organised than the other 11.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. The plain fact is that for every penny that goes in fraud, somebody loses because the whole basis of accountancy, of audit, of budgetary arrangements and of the discharge of the Commission's budget, which is tied up with the question of internal finances, is whether people have balanced the books properly, whether there are hidden items and whether there has been fraud. It is essential that the system is as good as it can be.

My great-great-grandfather was one of the first auditors in the 19th century. He was the chairman of the committee of inquiry into George Hudson, the railway king. I do not suggest that such practices have not been observed in the past. I am saying that as a result of his efforts—he went on to found the Institute of Chartered Accountants—there has been a considerable improvement in the quality of our auditing arrangements, which is why I paid tribute to members of the Public Accounts Committee and others. We have developed systems that, to a considerable extent, make the systems elsewhere in the European Community compare unfavourably. Our system is good. Their systems are sometimes virtually non-existent.

I am concerned that, for example, the Mafia will become deeply entrenched in the finances of the EC. I do not for one minute say that the Mafia is not already entrenched. However, I believe that the more centralisation we have, the greater is the probability that there will be an increase rather than a decrease in corruption. We should take that point seriously. As the amount of resources increases, so the opportunities for people to jump on the bandwagon or to get their noses in the trough grows. If hon. Members regard such subjects as being of minor importance, so be it. I and many hon. Members, whether in favour of the federal inclinations of the

[Mr. Cash]

Community or not, do not want the existing system to be perpetuated. We want to know whether the purported improvements under these arrangements will make a hap'orth or half an ecu of difference.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that, although we can all think of individual acts of fraud, the biggest is the common agricultural policy itself, which still accounts for more than 50 per cent. of the EC budget? Does he also accept that part of the act of fraud that comes under the CAP is the set-aside scheme? There was the example of a British farmer some years ago who received approximately £220,000 on the agreement that he would not farm that land for five years. Could the hon. Gentleman anticipate the reaction of the media if an unemployed or redundant coal miner or steel worker was given £220,000, told not to mine coal for five years and to go to the Costa del Sol——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The subject of the amendment is narrow and the hon. Gentleman is straying well beyond it.

10.45 pm

Mr. Cash: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was beginning to spread his wings a little, Mr. Lofthouse, but he made an important observation on internal financing. I gave the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Francis Maude, evidence that I had accumulated which showed the way in which the set-aside system was being deployed, which is why I chose that example. Just as there are so-called vineyard registers which are not vineyard registers, in parts of Germany and Italy the maps that one might have expected them to use to determine set-aside are not used. I discovered that in parts of Germany maps that pre-date the second world war are being used, and that in parts of eastern Germany no one has the faintest idea of who owns what.

The idea that we are playing a game of fluff with this subject is a misunderstanding of what is going on in the European Community. As the Community enlarges its competence, internal finance become more serious, as does the fraud that goes with it. If a huge area of eastern Germany does not have the type of land registry system that we would expect, if the Italian systems are incapable of being properly monitored, and if there are moving olive groves in Greece and no one can tell who owns what, we are bound to find that the vast amount of money that we are paying to the European Community is draining away down the plug hole.

When the Foreign Secretary tells us that by our efforts in these debates we are putting Britain down the plug hole, I would answer that we ought to concentrate on the practical questions which underpin our objections—fraud, corruption and the inability to maintain internal financing —and not on theological federalism.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend have time to mention the appalling fraud in EC tobacco subsidies, which are costing more than £1,000 million, especially in view of the tragic information that we received from the tapes half an hour ago that the head of the tobacco division of the EC's Agriculture Department, Mr. Antonio Quatraro, has jumped out of a window and committed suicide because he is alleged to have shown favouritism to Italian tobacco producers? When we think of the shortage of money for essentials in Europe and of unemployment, is it not appalling that all that money should be spent on wasteful subisidies to grow high-tar tobacco to be dumped in the third world?

Mr. Cash: That is disgraceful and it does not surprise me one bit because my hon. Friend and I have had reason to study the way in which many people have been trying to snuff out the opportunity for people to advertise tobacco or even to smoke it. We now find that the subsidies have been the subject of unbelievable frauds, and I am deeply grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing our attention to that tragic case.

Sir Richard Body: Surely only in this country and Denmark is there sufficient knowledge of what is going on, through our census systems, to provide any form of policing. That information is not available in the remaining 10 countries. There is an almost total absence of such information in Italy and it is almost completely absent in Portugal—as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has said—and the other countries. We cannot pursue the allegations of fraud and will never achieve any sensible control over the extravagance of the common agricultural policy until the other 10 countries have the same sort of information that Denmark and the United Kingdom have.

Mr. Cash: Absolutely—and it is interesting that my hon. Friend should mention the United Kingdom and Denmark. Ultimately, those of us with a much more refined belief in the rule of law are fighting hardest to preserve democracy. That is the key element. I am delighted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has just entered the Chamber—no doubt he has not come to listen to my speech. I missed him during the debate on economic and monetary union that went through the night; he is, after all, in charge of the finances of this country. I had hoped that we might have had at least one or two observations from him on the way in which our economic and monetary affairs are being handed over to other countries to run.

I gave an example of the manner in which the Court of Auditors had had difficulties over Greece and Portugal, but that is not the end of the matter. I understand from the document that, in Spain,

"an effective instrument for controlling plantations has only existed since 1986, the year in which a 'register of vineyards with entitlement to replant' was opened in certain of the autonomous regions of the country."

Regrettably, the all-too-familiar picture re-emerges. The report continues:

"This register does not, however, meet all the requirements of Community legislation. In Castille-La-Mancha"—

the very spot where Don Quixote was doubtless tilting at windmills—unlike us—some centuries ago—

"for example, vineyards which had already been grubbed up but in respect of which the grubbing-up operation had not been regularly declared were entered in the register."

To quote some Ministers who say it, the fact of the matter is that the document justifying entry in the register only states the fact that the wine grower is the owner of the vineyard and that he made a grubbing-up declaration on a certain date.

The report continues:

"the date of grubbing-up is not clearly indicated in any declaration submitted and recorded at the time the operation was carried out."

That is not what we would describe as fraud of the sort associated with the corruption of the Mafia. It involves a way of life and a way of business.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is called the enterprise culture.

Mr. Cash: It is certainly enterprise viniculture. The way in which such people approach the issues involves their culture. That is one of my basic objections to the treaty. It is not merely a matter of simply drawing on a piece of paper some sort of glorified nirvana for the benefit of the bureaucrats, so that they can ease their consciences. It is not so that the bureaucrats can assume that bits of paper have been prepared or that—as in the previous debate—the bureaucrats come up with a so-called pillar to overcome the difficulty posed by the Commission and Mr. Delors wanting a bit more foreign policy control. These pieces of paper are very dangerous indeed; moreover, they do not work.

Recently, I had dinner with a former Prime Minister. She asked me for my view on Europe. I said that I thought her task much more difficult than Churchill's. She asked why I thought that. I said, "He was faced with bombs and aircraft; you are faced only with pieces of paper." Those pieces of paper have a deceptive way about them, particularly when they are locked into legal requirements: they are far more difficult for us to deal with.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and I spent many years as fellow members of the Standing Committee on European Legislation. My hon. Friend has been to the Court of Auditors with me. We had a very interesting time. The Government Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), is laughing: he obviously does not think that the Court of Auditors has been doing the job that it ought to have been doing. The fact is, however, that we have had first-hand experience of the underlying questions about which the court was concerned.

Mr. Carey, whom we met—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford remembers him—has been very critical not only of the basis on which things are going, but of the way in which they would go under these arrangements.

Mr. Skinner: What did she say about the bits of paper?

Mr. Cash: I will not elaborate on that conversation. I will say, however, that she had, and still has, a very clear idea of the need for value for money. She knew what was going on.

I regret to say that, in the same report, the very question that was at the centre of one of her practical concerns—the Fontainebleau agreement, and our rebate—is now under attack from other member states, including Germany. The Court of Auditors' report has quite a lot to say about that.

Mr. Skinner: They need the money to pay for the vineyards.

Mr. Cash: That is true.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has just come in. I do not wish to leave any hon. Member out of the debate; I am sure that everyone wants to contribute throughout the night. I must say, however, that the Court of Auditors' reports have some important things to say about fishing activities, with which I shall deal in due course. What is going on now in relation to fishing operations has a great deal to do with the way in which the moneys are disbursed: our fishermen are worried about the way in which the system functions, and that has led to many of the comments in the reports.

I briefly mentioned the court's view about the progress still needed to make the reform of the structural funds fully effective. Hon. Members may recall that there was a motion relating to cohesion funds last night. I do not know why we were in a position to vote on a matter that relates to the Edinburgh summit, which, as far as I know, has no authority whatever. I have no way of knowing whether it is possible for us to vote on a matter relating to cohesion funds, when, as far as I know, there is no authorisation in law. I have the greatest difficulty in understanding that.

The structural funds are part of the European Community's responsibilities. Some years ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood)—now a senior Minister of State—and I were in the House when the structural funds were first given substantial refurbishment. That refurbishment, the internal financing of which is the subject of the Court of Auditors' report, amounted to an absolutely massive increase in the amount of money which was made available under them.

11 pm

We are pouring out huge sums of money on a regional and social engineering exercise, compatible with the treaty as it is developing, that is essentially socialist in nature. *[Interruption.]* I suspect that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) knows what I am about to say. I should like to know whether any of the money which is being frittered away on these corrupt and fraudulent activities and which is not being properly audited in these other countries could come to this country to help to pay miners who are being thrown out of work as a result of the decision that was taken by the House last night. I should like to know whether my miners, in Madeley and elsewhere in the Stafford constituency, could obtain genuine access to that money.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Can my hon. Friend make it abundantly clear to the Stafford constituency miners, and to all the people of Britain, that not one penny of the cohesion fund will come to Britain? The real tragedy is that our friends from Northern Ireland, who attend these debates so assiduously, cannot get a penny, while a few miles away, in the Republic of Ireland, money is being poured in from the cohesion fund. This was slipped on to the Order Paper late last night when no one knew, and it appeared to break every parliamentary rule and convention. It is a terrible scandal. Nobody cares. Nobody has looked into it. Sadly, no one here can now do a thing about it.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend has, as usual, made an extremely good point. What lies at the heart of——

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is the last statement by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) remotely true? Has the Clerk advised you that the authority of the House of Commons has been usurped in the way that my hon. Friend suggested?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. If we read what the Select Committee says, it tells the whole story. There is no precedent in the history of the United Kingdom Parliament of money being

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

allocated for legislation before it has been approved. I will give my hon. Friend the papers, if he likes to come along here and get them.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. There is nothing out of order at this stage, but I advise hon. Members to stick to the amendment. We are from time to time going well beyond the scope of the debate.

Mr. Cash: I am sticking rigidly, I am sure you will agree, Mr. Lofthouse——

Mr. Wells: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I appreciate your ruling on the matter, but what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said is, I believe, a calumny on both your office and that of the Clerks. I also believe that you should rule on whether or not his accusations are accurate.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair. I cannot rule upon it.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. One ought to seek clarification before attempting to speak. I hope you will therefore understand why I raise this matter. It is in order, I imagine, to look at the way in which the Community looks after its funds and resources and at how it attempts to police them. It is relevant, therefore, in this debate to cover those aspects.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. May I make it abundantly clear that there was no question of me in any way criticising the Clerks or the occupant of the Chair? What I criticised was something that happened last night which was absolutely shameful. It was not the fault in any way of the Chair or the Clerk. My hon. Friend knows that, if he likes to come along, I shall show it all to him.

The First Deputy Chairman: It would be a good idea now to get back to the debate.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. The statement made by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) seems to me to be of great importance and seriousness. If indeed moneys have been expended without the authority of Parliament, surely that is a matter for the whole House to discuss with some urgency. There is a basic principle in law in this country that Government expenditure is not made without the authority of the House.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Cash: It may not be a matter for the Chair, Mr. Lofthouse, but it is certainly a matter for hon. Members, as I am sure that you will appreciate. Therefore, it is in order for us to discuss these questions because, if our own Parliament is to go in for an illegal budget, which was admitted by Ministers last year, and is now agreeing in resolutions to arrangements which affect the manner in which we dispense money to the cohesion fund, which has not yet been established, because this treaty is not yet through—which is what I understand the position to be —then quite clearly we have reason to be deeply concerned.

My complaint about these provisions and the internal financing of the Community is that there is not the structure, or, as the Court of Auditors says, the organisation, the equivalent of Standing Orders, or the equivalent legislation to ensure that rules are properly obeyed. That is the problem. That is what is at the heart of all this and what concerns me. If we are now slipping into the same kind of thing as a result of giving spurious authorisation before the treaty has been ratified to cohesion funds, I fear for the future of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has suggested that I should get the parrot off my shoulder—or words to that effect—but this Maastricht treaty is a dead parrot; the only problem is that it keeps on talking.

I wish to concentrate on the important questions that are the crux of this matter. The economic and political defeatism that lies at the heart of not monitoring the internal financing of the Community, which, by common consent, is not being done properly, is the exact opposite of the way in which we have built up our democratic institutions. It is the divergence of our cultural and our practical approaches to these questions that causes so many of the difficulties that we experience in relation to provisions of this kind.

When it comes to the discharge of the Commission's budget or, indeed, to what happens next year if all this has gone through, and I am asked what I think about whether we ought to give more power to the European Parliament on all these matters, I will look at what is going on, knowing perfectly well that the European Parliament will not be able to cope with it, whereas I know that the House could. I do not want these provisions to go through. This is not an improvement. It does not follow that, merely because we are giving people more power, giving ever-greater opportunities for closer union—indeed, actually creating a union, not merely closer union—we will improve the internal finances of the Community.

At the end of the day, the bottom line in all Parliaments is the raising of money and the dispensing of public expenditure. *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order.

Mr. Cash: I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East was raising a point of order, but, unfortunately, he has just tottered into the Chamber.

Mr. Dykes: I have got the vapours.

Mr. Cash: I am now told that he has got the vapours. I do not know whether that was a point of order, but it was made from a sedentary position.

The problems that I was identifying in respect of the structural funds are extremely important to what is happening in the Community. Those structural funds are being vastly increased at an unacceptable rate.

It was made clear by some, but not by the Government, that, as part of the deal at Edinburgh, the Germans were to receive substantially increased structural funds and cohesion funds to enable them to improve standards of living in eastern Germany. The money involved ran into billions of pounds.

I should like to know whether it is a good idea for us to be giving vast amounts of money by way of transfers of resources to eastern Germany when the Germans are investing massively through the Treuhand or otherwise——

Mr. Dykes: Treuhand.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend speaks German so eloquently he might be thought to be a German.

The Germans have now managed to raise their level of investment in eastern Europe to 85 per cent.

I know that you are watching me with great care, Mr. Lofthouse, and I understand why, and I would not want to dissuade you from doing that, as I will stick rigidly to the internal finances of the Community. I am now coming to the second point to which the court has referred.

Mr. Wells: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cash: No. I have great affection for my hon. Friend, but it does not extend——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member is not giving way.

Mr. Wells: Can my hon. Friend explain himself? He was referring to 85 per cent. of what?

Mr. Cash: Some 85 per cent. of the foreign investment that has been accumulated in eastern Europe has come from German sources. I do not hold that against the Germans, but if they have all that money to invest in seed corn in an area that is outside the European Community because it is a low wage area, I should like to know, in relation to the internal finances of the Community, why we are paying billions of pounds to eastern Germany. That is the practical point that I wanted to make.

Sir Teddy Taylor: We should like to know how it was that eight nations came back from Edinburgh saying, "We are going to be in billions", but no one was saying who would have to pay for it. Surely that is what is wrong with the internal finances which are the subject of the amendment. They all came back from Edinburgh and were treated as national heroes, but we are still trying to find out who will have to pay for it. Someone is being conned and we should know who it is. I should like to know the facts and if my hon. Friend could find out, we should be greatly obliged.

Mr. Cash: At the heart of my hon. Friend's intervention is another important point. If we make transfers on the basis of these socialist theories to other countries and the money simply goes down the plug hole with corruption and so on, the member states will have encouraged an attitude of mind which is self-perpetuating. They simply want to draw more and more money into the system with less and less control over it.

Mr. Corbyn: May I bring the hon. Member back to the structural funds? Many people are concerned about the vast funds that go to road construction and other construction projects in Greece, Spain and Portugal, often against the strong opposition of environmental interests and of people who live in those areas. Governments have accepted this money because they have been told that it has to be spent within a limited time and it ends with them riding roughshod over local planning, environment and agricultural considerations. Does the hon. Member not think that these are serious matters which are endemic in any highly centralised economic undertaking?

11.15 pm

Mr. Cash: It has not been often that I have found myself in agreement with the hon. Gentleman, but he has put his finger on an important point there.

In the Court of Auditors' report, severe criticisms are made of the manner in which, in the aftermath of earthquakes in Italy, the system has been operated. It is well known that the system has not resulted in the money going to the people who are earthquake victims. It has gone to line the pockets of contractors and jerry builders and that group.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Cash: I am besieged on all sides, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton).

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: In replying to the intervention from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is dealing with an area which causes immense concern to many Conservative Members and, it appears, to many Opposition Members as well: that structural funds are not spent for the purpose that they appear to be allocated for. They are allocated, in fact, to various countries as inducements. They are being spent exactly as the hon. Member for Islington, North said—on unnecessary infrastructure projects. The sums are merely spent because they have that money in the pipeline, in the bank, and if they do not spend it by a specific time, they will lose it and will not get an increased allowance under the structural fund in the following financial year.

Mr. Cash: That is yet another valuable insight. I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), the former Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, has just come in. I bet that he would not have approved of all the fraud that we have been unearthing as we go through this Court of Auditors' report. It is a matter of considerable interest to the people of this country.

I should like to come back to the intervention from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I have here a reference by the court to the reconstruction projects in areas devastated by earthquakes, which have received New Community Instrument—NCI—loans and interest rate subsidies.

The court concluded that although the aid was justified —and who would not have wanted to give aid to those wretched earthquake victims?—there were considerable delays and weaknesses in the financial control of the work.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse, I wonder whether you have had notification from the Liberal party and the Welsh nationalist party that, when they voted with the Government for the debate to continue, they would be frequently, if not continuously, absent from the debate which they, by their votes, kept going?

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Member knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Cash: The court concluded that

"although the aid was justified, there were considerable delays and weaknesses in the financial control of the work."

The court recommended that where finance was

"not used in accordance with the objective, the Commission should request repayment of the interest subsidy."

That must be regarded as a serious matter— *[Interruption.]* I am delighted to note, with the entry into the Chamber of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), that a kind of telepathy is at work. We thought that his hon. Friends had lost the "c" in Liberal Democrats. It was becoming difficult for us to be sure whether they would be attending our proceedings.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend has been speaking to the amendment for a considerable time. How can any Liberal Democrat comment on his contribution, not having been present for most of it?

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that pertinent intervention and I shall, albeit briefly, return to the point raised in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford about the counterpart fund rules and responsibilities in respect of eastern Europe. Indeed, I was about to consider the question of internal financing in that connection when my hon. Friend raised the issue with me. We are told in respect of eastern Europe that the

"monitoring of the planning, implementation and control of projects which are contracted out is inadequate, while internal control and monitoring of the European Development Fund are insufficient."

That is stated by the Court of Auditors, so we should be wary about allowing increased competences. The greater the competences, the greater the amount of internal financing; and the greater the corruption that I am exposing, the greater the reason for reducing the amount that goes into internal financing. In other words, there is less reason for the Maastricht treaty, which is expanding competences in every direction.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the fourth resource among the elements of resource that member states contribute to the financing of the Community is a percentage of VAT receipts? As member states increase their VAT receipts, they increase their contributions to the Community. Accordingly, does he agree that that fourth resource should not be expanded—*[Interruption.]*—by the decision of a member state?

Mr. Cash: There seems to be such overwhelming rejection of the hon. Gentleman's argument that I, too, have no hesitation in disagreeing with him. But with respect to the Trentham pit, it is a pity that we cannot be guaranteed the kind of money that is available to the German and French coal miners. Lest I be ruled out of order, I mention the coal issue, Mr. Lofthouse, because it is related directly to internal financing. The European Commission has authorised for 1991, the last year for

which figures are available, £6 billion by way of EC state aid for the coal mines in Germany. For France, the sum is £2 billion and for the United Kingdom £160 million.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I take the hon. Gentleman's point—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is a good point."] It may or may not be a good point. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that there has been fraud or questionable auditing in coal mining matters, that is in order, but if he is not suggesting that, it is out of order.

Mr. Cash: It would be out of order were it not for the fact that I shall now deal briefly with RECHAR, which relates directly to the absolute iniquity of the fact that the miners of the United Kingdom—as a result of the accountants——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Whatever the hon. Gentleman may feel, is he suggesting that there has been fraud in the allocation of RECHAR? If not, he is out of order.

Mr. Cash: I am glad to respond to that point, Mr. Lofthouse. The question of internal financing may be partly a matter of fraud, but it may also be a matter of wrong accounting. As you may recall, Mr. Lofthouse, the great issue about RECHAR is the manner in which the United Kingdom has organised the accounting arrangements for the moneys that would go to the coalfield communities. Therefore, I believe that I am in order and, as I promised, I will remain faithful to your injunction to stick to the issue in question.

Mr. Home Robertson: What I have to say may be helpful. The hon. Gentleman is saying that the money is being applied fraudulently. Surely the problem identified by Commissioner Millan is that the British Government were embezzling European Community money which was not being used as additional money, on top of funds which would have been spent by the Government in any case. The lack of additionality has been a case of fraud by the Government in the use of EC funds.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) must now stick to auditing and fraud or I shall continue to rule him out of order.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to you, Mr. Lofthouse. Internal audit and fraud are adjacent issues, but I will finish with the question of coal mines and audit because I have made my point.

Another difficulty is that of the practices used by the European Commission to collect revenue, and this is an extraordinary state of affairs. The Court of Auditors states that the practices used by the Commission are contrary to the financial regulation. In other words, not only is the House—according to Ministers last year or the year before—engaging in illegal budgets, but the Commission itself is collecting revenue in a manner contrary to financial regulation. We are told that a number of gaps arise owing to the fact that management responsibilities are shared by the Commission and the member states.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) will be interested in my next point. The court also concluded that there were deficiencies in the supporting documentation—some of which appears to have landed beside me, although I am not sure from where—submitted by member states in respect of agricultural guarantee expenditure.

I have already given a number of examples of fraud and the way in which the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund has been defrauded, but I wish to cite another example.

Mr. Lord: With regard to fraud, is not the basic fact that elected representatives must keep very sharp and careful control of expenditure? We all know how difficult it is for district and county councils to do this. It is also difficult for the House of Commons——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is difficult for me to ascertain whether the hon. Gentleman is in order. The buzz in the Chamber is so great that I cannot hear what he is saying.

Mr. Lord: I am sorry about that, Mr. Lofthouse. I was asking my hon. Friend——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must address the Chair.

Mr. Lord: I am sorry, Mr. Lofthouse. I thought that I had addressed you by name.

11.30 pm

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman must face the Chair.

Mr. Lord: I shall face the Chair throughout my intervention.

I was putting to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) the point that fraud is very difficult to control. Uncovering fraud is a crucial part of the role of elected representatives, whether they are members of district councils, county councils or the House of Commons. A crucial task of public representatives is to keep a very sharp eye on public expenditure. It is difficult enough to do that at the level of a national Parliament, but it is almost impossible at the European level, where one encounters Commissioners and all the problems to which my hon. Friend is referring. I should like my hon. Friend to indicate that he accepts this point and to comment on it.

Mr. Cash: I am very happy to do so. The really important question is whether we have a system buttressed by people who are asking the right questions. That is the importance of Prime Minister's Question Time and of the questions that are put by members of Select Committees.

Mr. Corbyn: I hope that the hon. Gentleman, before drawing his remarks to a conclusion, will give some indication of the means by which this fraud was uncovered and of the powers of individual Members of this or any other national Parliament to question those who perpetrated the fraud and to ensure that those people are prosecuted.

Mr. Cash: In the first place, there is power to seek evidence from, for example, members of the Court of Auditors—a power which is sometimes exercised. Just as we visited the Court of Auditors, members of the court could visit this country. I note that the Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation has such enthusiasm for this debate that he has come into the Chamber twice. I have no doubt that, if the Committee were to agree, he could invite members of the Court of Auditors to visit this place so that we might achieve the symmetry that has been referred to. Thus the internal

[Mr. Cash]

financing of the Community could be reported upon directly. The Court of Auditors could explain to us how it had arrived at its conclusions.

Mrs. Gorman: The Court of Auditors uncovers fraud, but the sums involved are so astronomical—recently £45 million was fiddled by, I think, the wine growers in the south of Italy—that it is impossible to recover them without bankrupting countries—and Italy is bankrupt already. Is not the ultimate fraud and obscenity that people in this country are unable to sleep tonight because the VAT man is breathing down their necks? They cannot put together the money that they need to pay their VAT bills, and they will go out of business tomorrow.

Mr. Cash: I was delighted with the reforms in the Budget which I hope will go some way to improving the position which my hon. Friend has mentioned. It was a remarkably good provision in the Budget which will relieve small businesses of the difficulties which they have been experiencing.

If I may turn to matters relating to fisheries——

Sir Teddy Taylor: Before my hon. Friend moves on to fishing, will he, to try to prove the point, ask the Treasury Minister what progress has been made over the 17 million lire paid to the Mafia for the delivery of non-existent fruit juice to NATO headquarters in Palermo? No matter whether it was found out by the European Parliament, the fraud department or anybody else, we have told the Government four times about it, but we have yet to hear about anything being done. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the problem is not finding the fraud but in getting anyone to do anything about it.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend is completely right. Non-existent fruit juice is not an enjoyable drink. If, in addition to that unpleasant drink, we find that they are ripping us off at the same time, the most serious penalties should be visited upon these people. Apparently there is no way of identifying where the fruit juice is or even whether it ever existed.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is talking about fraud or the misuse of public money, particularly money which has come from the hard-pressed taxpayers of this country. Are we in a position to do anything about it when so many within the Community, whether they are part of the Commission or are members of the European Assembly, are part of the gravy train which is using the money? The European Community appears to have huge sums of money which it can spend on taking people to Strasbourg and to Brussels. Is it likely, therefore, that the people there will do anything about the abuse or that the House will have a real say in getting the fraud exterminated from the activities of the European Community?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend has made yet another extremely valuable intervention with his usual vehemence, enthusiasm and conviction. The real problem is that nobody is doing anything about it. As long as we allow ourselves to be neutered as a Parliament, and as long as that other body which is the neuter of the European Parliament is allowed to expand its neutered competences, nothing will be done about it. The problem is called political defeatism.

I see a Government Whip shaking his head. I remember conversations with him in the past when he agreed with every word I had to say on the subject. I have not the slightest doubt that he is putting me in his little black book because an hon. Member is not supposed to make rude remarks to Whips on duty. I am watching him with great interest; if for one minute his poker face slips and he shakes his head yet again, I have to say that we, too, note these things down in our little black book.

Mr. Corbyn: I asked earlier about how fraud is discovered. The hon. Gentleman said that, theoretically, the Court of Auditors could be questioned by a Committee of this Parliament. What powers do we have to do anything about the fraud in EC institutions on structural funds, the CAP and in many other areas? People throughout Europe pay taxes and much of that money seems to find its way into the hands of the Mafia or into grandiose, unwanted and often badly built construction projects that are of no use to anybody. We need to know how to sort that out.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. There is an arrangement by which member states are responsible for monitoring many of those funds and invigilating in questions that arise in connection with them. Fraud could also be dealt with not merely by macro-economic reports—which is what the reports are —but by individual citizens in each member state. It is open to British courts to take action on fraud, but the issue that I am addressing is the internal financing of the Community. I mention that again in case hon. Members did not hear me refer to it recently. Macro-economic questions are an aggregation of individual frauds, which are often substantial. People may laugh about that fraud, but we should not forget that the British taxpayer pays for a great deal of it.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend not think that it is unwise for anyone to imagine that nation states which are being asked to police the substantial largesse that they receive, and especially politicians who are often re-elected on a platform of such expenditure, will apply themselves in the disciplined way that we understand is necessary?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend is right. There is a kind of Parkinson's disease, let alone a Parkinson's law, in relation to the competences of the European Community. The greater the competences, the weaker the body politic, and the more the Parkinson's disease works its way into the accounting system.

Mr. Leighton: One of the reasons for rampant fraud in the Community is that the investigation, inspection and policing are carried out by the member states. Inspectors have no real motivation to investigate because any money that they save does not go to their Governments but back to the Community. Many officials in Italy seem to be working hand in glove with the Mafia. Can we be confident that they are carrying out any inspections at all?

Mr. Cash: I can speak from personal experience because I spoke to the Court of Auditors a few years ago. I was told about a case in southern Italy in which the court was trying to get hold of dockets for a transaction. Every

time the court officials arrived at one town, the dockets had been moved to another. It was a kind of merry-go-round. For the reasons that the hon. Gentleman mentions, it is difficult to exercise control.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The hon. Gentleman agrees, I hope, that we must have confidence in our own state and administration and in co-operation between neighbouring states before we can criticise the super-Euro state. I am apprehensive about fraud ever being properly investigated in the European Community, because since 1983-84 the fraud of international investments perpetrated mainly on people in Northern Ireland and Great Britain has not been properly investigated by the British or Irish Governments. If we cannot look after fraud on our own doorstep, how can we expect fraud to be properly looked after in Europe?

Mr. Cash: The experience, as I have understood it, in Northern Ireland and the difficulties with these transfers of cattle from one side of the border to the other and back again——

Mr. Rogers: It is a carousel.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman says that it is a carousel. It is an incredible state of affairs. Every time they go round, they collect another lot. There is a remarkable story, which I have no reason to doubt is true, of fraud with regard to cattle and their slaughter in Italy. It was decided that a convenient way of identifying fraud would be to ask the Italian farmers to produce as evidence of slaughter the ear of an individual beast. It was not long before there were a lot of cattle with only one ear wandering round the plains of Italy. Then somebody else had an idea and people cut off both ears, so that they got double the amount of money and still kept the cattle on the plains of Italy. The ingenuity of these fraudsters is unbelievable.

Not only is the story true; it is an indication of the lack of accountability and audit.

11.45 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My hon. Friend knows full well that I have some sympathy with his general views about the efficacy of the European Community. However, I hope that he will think about facing reality, and the reality is this: the bulk of the official Opposition went home ages ago. I counted them and about 40 to 50 hon. Members are left here, of whom 10 to 15 have no option but to be here——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. What has that got to do with this amendment?

Mr. Porter: A great deal, Mr. Lofthouse.

The First Deputy Chairman: As far as I can ascertain, it has nothing whatever to do with the amendment.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to you, Mr. Lofthouse, for dispatching that irrelevant intervention.

I wish to move on now, as I would have done but for the enthusiasm of hon. Members who, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), wish to participate in the debate because they appreciate the impact that all this is having on their constituents. What I cannot understand is why my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South, who generally sympathises with us in this matter, is not prepared to take the kind of interest in the debate which his views, as expressed to me in the past, would suggest. That is a matter for him, but it is not a matter for him to come along to the House and start moaning and groaning——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is a matter for the hon. Member to address himself to the amendment and not to his hon. Friend.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to be able to ignore my hon. Friend on this occasion.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Gentleman made a point about fraud and its effect on the British taxpayer. Will he give an estimate of the amount of money that has disappeared in fraud from the £14 billion that was paid by the British taxpayer between 1980 and 1990 to the Common Market? These grants are paraded about as though the European Community were giving us something, whereas all it is doing is giving us some of our own money back. It goes to Brussels, is laundered and comes back in a much smaller proportion, and yet it is paraded as though something is being conceded to us.

Of the £2·5 billion a year that we now contribute, will the hon. Member hazard a guess at how much disappears in fraud? My constituents, who are very hard pressed to meet the demands on them for local tax, income tax and VAT, which now dominates tax revenue, would certainly be interested to know. If that figure were widely disseminated, there is no doubt that the widespread hostility to Maastricht would be greatly reinforced.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. He is talking about the kind of financial carousel that we see with the cattle in Northern Ireland. As the money goes round and round the system, no doubt people are taking their slice of it all the way round, and that makes a substantial contribution to the fraudulent activities that we are discussing.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a governor of the European investment bank, and we contribute 19 per cent. of its capital. It is a matter for concern that, irrespective of the amount that we contribute, we are financing huge tranches of Italian industry. We get back out of the bank far less in loans than do the Italians, who I understand receive 40 per cent. of all the loans made. If I am wrong —my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East appears to have the vapours again. Every time such a matter is mentioned he says that what is being said is nonsense. I should be delighted if he would intervene if he can explain to me where I am wrong. Clearly he does not dare to speak, because he knows that he does not have the facts; he shows that he disagrees with me, but he does not come up with any evidence.

Mr. Wells: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cash: Yes, of course.

Mr. Wells: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for at last giving way to someone who is informed on such matters. He has previously failed to do me the honour of giving way to me on other such matters, which has distressed me. Does he agree that the European investment bank is financed basically by Government guarantee—that the money is raised on the money markets of Europe and of the rest of the international community, and then re-lent? Perhaps the interest rates and charges of the European

[Mr. Wells]

investment bank are unattractive to British investors and more attractive to Italian investors. It is wrong for my hon. Friend to mislead the Committee by suggesting that we are giving money from our Treasury and our taxpayers to that bank. I should be grateful if he would make that clear.

Mr. Cash: I should be more than happy to confirm what I have just said: that the European investment bank has a system and that part of that system concerns the making of loans. On the figures that I have—I am always open to correction and always delighted to be corrected whenever necessary; I would never want to mislead the Committee in any way—40 per cent. of the loans made are made to Italy.

Another matter that should be the subject of close audit and scrutiny is the fact that France appears to get about 25 per cent. of the European investment bank grants in aid to small businesses, whereas the United Kingdom receives only 2 or 3 per cent. The auditors should examine that imbalance closely. As with coal subsidies, we get the wrong end of the stick. If there were a level playing field in the European Community, as we are making a substantial contribution of 19 per cent. of the capital of the investment bank there would seem to be good reason for us to expect an equitable sum by way of return. I do not know what the reasons are.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): If my hon. Friend wants to know anything about the borrowing from or the lending by the European investment bank, he can look in the annual report which is available to him. All the figures are shown and divided clearly there. I do not have the figures with me tonight, because they have nothing to do with the amendment.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has been given some latitude tonight. He has strained my patience from time to time. In our previous encounter, although he identified the movement of finance, he identified no fraud. We must get back to the amendment. The debate has been going on for a long time. It is becoming very tedious and repetitious in many aspects. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind.

Mr. Cash: Indeed.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. You will have heard the Paymaster General say that this debate has nothing to do with the European investment bank. If the guarantee given by the United Kingdom on behalf of United Kingdom taxpayers was called upon to be taken up, that would surely be a matter of interest in the internal finance of the European Community.

The First Deputy Chairman: That point is hypothetical at the moment. The Chair is not responsible for what the Paymaster General says.

Mr. Cash: The report by the Court of Auditors deals at some length with the European investment bank and its functions. I will leave it at that.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. But does the report deal with fraud?

Mr. Cash: It does deal in part with questions that relate to fraudulent activities. I will now move on to fisheries matters, which are of great importance to this country at the moment. I will describe some of the problems that have arisen in relation to internal financing, as exemplified by the report by the Court of Auditors.

I cite the example of a Portuguese sardine fishery. It is regrettable that a system was set up in relation to a Portuguese sardine fishery. I see that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, that great Euro-enthusiast, has now come into the Chamber. This is a matter which falls directly within his responsibilities. Perhaps he can throw some light on the problem.

The producer organisation in question had established a withdrawal period of fewer than 115 days for all vessels. As the Commission had accepted the approach prescribed for that producer organisation, compensation was paid for days on which no fishing would be carried out anyway. That added about 40 per cent. to the European taxpayers' contribution. It is incredible that such a thing can be allowed to go on. It is not just a question whether the Court of Auditors has identified that problem after the event. The question is how the arrangements are set up in the first place and how they go on with nothing being done. That is an especially bad case.

Another example concerns Spain, which is dealt with on page 111 of the Court of Auditors' report of 15 December 1992. It states that, after some investigation,

> "Finally, an on-the-spot inspection revealed that one fishing vessel that was in dry dock for repairs had not submitted its 'rol de despacho' and, that therefore, this period may be considered a period of fishing activity."

Those examples have caused the Court of Auditors considerable concern and they ought to cause us concern, especially given the great difficulties that fishing problems have caused us recently.

12 midnight

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: As one sardine to another, may I say that if any fraud is being committed, it is by the hon. Member boring us to death all night unnecessarily?

Mr. Cash: I am glad that my hon. and learned Friend was able to get up and to sit down as quickly as he did. I would not want to refer to his state of mind, but the Committee shuddered as he collapsed in a heap after that brilliant intervention.

Many matters need to be brought out in this debate and no doubt many other hon. Members would like to speak. I should be only too delighted to ensure that the issue can be given the thorough investigation that it deserves, as I have only scratched the surface of the subject.

Sir John Cope: My invervention might be helpful to the Committee at this point, particulary if I deal with the amendment. I appreciate that it has many ramifications and my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has gone through many of those lying a long way behind it. In doing so he has made out a good case against amendment No.230, which he tabled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford may want more elaborate controls. At one time he seemed to suggest total integration of the Community and a federal state with a strong central authority as the only solution to fraud in the Community. That does not appeal to me, and

I am sure that it does not appeal to him either. Nevertheless, he seemed to suggest that it was the only way to deal with those problems.

I realise that my hon. Friend would want to go much further to control Community expenditure and the way in which it is dispensed, but in my view that is not an argument for passing the amendment. On the contrary,. if the amendment were passed it would delete some of the very provisions in the treaty which strengthen the fight against fraud—and I hope that I am second to none in wishing the fight against fraud to carry on.

Many criticisms of expenditure have been made and all sorts of examples of fraud within the Community have been produced, mostly from the reports of the Court of Auditors. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford referred to the report on the 1991 budget, which the House debated on 10 March.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Minister agree that the best way to end fraud would be to do away with the awful common agricultural policy, in which fraud is endemic? Should we not exercise some sort of subsidiarity and let each country run its own agriculture?

Sir John Cope: I do not agree, but I will return to the CAP a little later.

Amendment No. 230 seeks to remove that section of the treaty which replaces the existing article 206b with a new article 206. The new article repeats many of the words in the existing article, but adds in paragraph 1—significantly—that special reports by the Court of Auditors are to be examined, where relevant, by the Council and the European Parliament.

The real addition, however, occurs in paragraphs 2, 3 and the fourth paragraph, which strengthen the fight against fraud in the Community, and we are all agreed that it is desirable to do that. It would be a mistake not to include in the treaty those paragraphs or the other sections which strengthen the fight against fraud and which were negotiated at Maastricht. It would, therefore, be a mistake to pass amendment No. 230.

A number of other issues have been raised, to which I should respond at least briefly, although some of them were less than central to the argument about amendment No. 230. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) was concerned that the imposition of value added tax on fuel would swell European Community funds, and an Opposition Member raised a similar point. As I believe my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford acknowledged, it is a mistake to imagine that the calculation of the VAT resource is done on a standardised basis. That issue relates to amendment No. 57, which appears in a later group of amendments.

I reject the charge made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and others that Ministers have not taken up the fight against fraud in the Community. We have done so in a series of ways during our presidency, and also in the negotiation of the Maastricht treaty, particularly in article 206, which amendment No. 230 seeks to delete.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend has just skipped over an important issue by saying that the Government did their best over that section of the Maastricht treaty dealing with fraud. What was done to reduce fraud? It would be helpful to know that. We have had about two hours of debate on fraud, but we are still unconvinced that we are able to do what should be done about the high level of fraud and corruption in the Community.

Sir John Cope: We have, on a number of occasions, stated some of the steps that were taken in the Maastricht treaty. Article 206, to which the amendment relates, plays an important part in that process. It gives enhanced powers to examine the Commission's implementation of the budget. The Court of Auditors is required to give a statement of assurance on the reliability of the Community's accounts. The European Parliament has additional powers to obtain the necessary information in the course of examining the Commission on the basis of the annual report. Under article 206 of the Maastricht treaty, that power also covers any relevant special reports made by the Court of Auditors.

In the past few months we have had some other successes in the fight against fraud, some of which will be discussed in the House on other occasions not connected with the Maastricht treaty. Amendments to the financial regulations mean that the Commission's spending proposals must in future be accompanied by a justification of each programme on grounds of cost-effectiveness. I attach considerable importance to that. It will help the Council of Ministers to make proper decisions about the implementation of the various programmes leading to expenditure.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend is being very helpful.

Let us suppose that, as a Conservative Back Bencher, I receive evidence of what I consider to be misuse of public structural funds given to, for instance, Portugal. Should I raise the matter with my right hon. Friend, or should I go direct to the Court of Auditors? How does a Back Bencher who is concerned about what he sees as the misuse of public funds—or fraud, or corruption—raise such matters?

Sir John Cope: My hon. Friend can take whichever course he chooses. Certainly I would encourage him to come to me, if he wished to do so, with information about any fraud that was being perpetrated in connection with Community funds or, for that matter, in connection with United Kingdom Government funds. I would encourage him to approach me, or whoever is doing my job. Of course, if he wished, he could approach the Court of Auditors directly.

Mr. Bill Walker: I have more confidence in our Treasury team than some other hon. Members may have expressed, so I am delighted to hear that we should approach my right hon. Friend or other members of that team.

Every day we see evidence of such practices. For example, Air Portugal has just been given a subsidy which puts it in a uniquely competitive position; the same has happened with Iberia, Air France, Sabina and others. That puts all the United Kingdom airlines at a disadvantage. To whom should I address my comments if any discipline is to be introduced into those unfair aviation arrangements?

Sir John Cope: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is suggesting that fraud is involved, or whether he simply dislikes decisions which have been properly arrived at. It could be either. If he is referring to fraud, I encourage him to come to me in so far as British Ministers are concerned;

[Sir John Cope]

if he is concerned about the policy which leads to decisions that he does not like, he can by all means approach my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Beggs: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of the rumour throughout Northern Ireland that large sums are being paid to terrorist organisations by business men for protection. He will know that our Government permit those moneys to be set aside against taxation. Does he know whether comparable practices take place in other European countries? Does he know to what extent payments may be made to the Mafia and other organisations in the Community which can be set against taxation?

Sir John Cope: I am not sure how that question relates to what we are discussing. As the hon. Gentleman knows, however, I have had some responsibility for related matters in the past and the matter that he raises would probably come before the House as part of the Finance Bill debates. I can give him no information off the cuff about other countries' taxation provision in relation to such payments, but in any case the payments that he has mentioned will not come out of Community funds. They are payments made by individuals or companies from their own funds; the question is how they are treated in the context of national taxation, which is not a matter related to these amendments or to the treaty.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) referred to the Mafia. I do not think that any hon. Member believes that the Mafia comes by any of its income in what one would describe as a legal manner. The Mafia derives its income mainly by means of extortion and fraud. From what has been printed in the press and other reports, it seems that the Mafia creams off a great deal of money from the Common Market—from funds provided by this House through payments to Europe. In those circumstances, what assuance can the right hon. Gentleman give me that the Mafia declares its income for tax purposes, never mind other individuals trying to get money that they can then give to the Mafia as protection money?

12.15 am

Sir John Cope: When I was in the Northern Ireland Office I visited Italy to look into the fight against the Mafia, so I have some knowledge of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but not enough to answer his question authoritatively off the cuff. Italy's national taxation arrangements are a matter for that country. It does not arise out of the amendment. What does arise out of the amendment and what was also referred to in the debate was the extent to which the Mafia might be taking European money to which it is not entitled. That is exactly the sort of matter that the Court of Auditors is there to investigate, uncover and report upon. It is therefore important for the role of the Court of Auditors to be strengthened. Under the Maastricht treaty it becomes a full institution. That is not a matter towards which the amendments are directed, but it is relevant to the discussion so far. Italy is a net contributor to the budget, so the point about British funds is an arguable one.

All Community money should be properly spent. The Court of Auditors exists to see that that is done, and the treaty assists the Court of Auditors to do so. It is important for the Committee to bear that point in mind at this stage in the debate.

To judge from the interventions, one of the matters of concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and some of his hon. Friends is the increase in the structural funds and the cohesion fund that is taking place now. That increase was agreed when Lady Thatcher was Prime Minister. It followed through in all the Budgets, including the 1993 Budget. We have already discussed the conclusions arrived at in Edinburgh, and there will be other opportunities for debate. We shall need to debate the new own resources decision when it is made, but that matter is not before the Committee now. The matter before the Committee is the question of increasing the powers of the Court of Auditors and the European Parliament to pursue fraud—something which is entirely desirable.

Mr. Leighton: The right hon. Gentleman relies on the Court of Auditors. What powers of investigation, policing and control does it have?

Sir John Cope: The powers are set out in the treaty. If the hon. Member refers to articles 188b and 188c, he will see them set out there. That is not, however, the article to which the amendment is directed. Those powers are strengthened in many respects by the Maastricht treaty. They are incorporated in the first part of the treaty. Under the treaty, the Court of Auditors is transformed into a full institution.

Mention was made of practices contrary to the financial regulations having been discovered by the Court of Auditors. In future, of course, when the Maastrict treaty is ratified by all states and comes into force, the powers of the Court of Auditors to pursue matters of that kind will be increased. It will, for instance, be able to go to the European Court of Justice if it wishes.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) expressed concern in an intervention that there was a problem as to whether member states policed strongly enough within their countries. The remedy for that is to strengthen the Court of Auditors as this treaty does, to strengthen its ability to go to the member states, to co-operate with the auditing authorities, which is what it is required to do, as appropriate, and to pursue fraud wherever it occurs.

It would be a great mistake for the Committee to pass amendment No. 230, or for that matter the other amendments in this group, as this would have the effect of weakening the fight against fraud, which we all wish to strengthen, as has been shown by everyone who has spoken in the debate.

I said that I would mention the common agricultural policy, which comes partly under this amendment because the amendment strengthens the Court of Auditors and the Parliament's powers in respect of that as well as of other items of expenditure. The reform of the common agricultural policy agreed in Brussels last year involves significant changes in the way in which subsidy payments are made. In particular, there is an anti-fraud measure known as the integrated administration and control system across all member states. It is relevant to mention this, particularly in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as we shall all no doubt be getting complaints from farmers

before long about the detail of the checks being put in place by the Community to control expenditure on the CAP.

If we get such complaints, it will ill behove us to complain too much about them because, as the Court of Auditors' reports have made clear, there has been fraud by United Kingdom farmers as well as by overseas farmers. In addition, by applying this across all 12 member states, we shall improve financial control and the fight against fraud in the CAP.

Mr. Bill Walker: The comments that my right hon. Friend is making are very important. I am sure that he will understand that those of us with large farming constituencies get evidence from our own farmers that nation states are not pursuing the necessary documentation and all the things that our farmers are complaining about. Who should I come to with these complaints?

Sir John Cope: My hon. Friend can come to me if he wishes, but I would suggest that he went straight to our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. My information from him is that they are all implementing the system that I have just described.

Amendment No. 230 would weaken the fight against fraud when we all wish to strengthen it. I therefore suggest that the Committee reject the amendment.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): On the last point, I imagine that it is not coincidental that we have all had a letter from the Minister of Agriculture today setting out provisions for the integrated administration and control system. I notice that he is offering to undertake meetings after Easter. Perhaps he had better go and meet the farmers in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Our concerns on the questions dealt with in this group of amendments are: first, that the Community budget—it is really a matter of common sense as well as propriety—should be deployed effectively to achieve the objectives of agreed policies; secondly, that financial transactions should be properly accounted for and subject to proper audit; and thirdly, that there is efficiency and fairness in both the raising and the spending of funds.

We are, after all, talking about a very large budget—over £54 billion for the current year—to which the United Kingdom, as we have heard, is one of the largest net contributors. How it is raised and how it is spent is clearly of enormous importance. It is important both in terms of propriety of spending and value for money. It is also important politically, and is an extremely sensitive issue. Nothing diminishes more quickly public confidence in the Community and its institutions than the knowledge, or even the suspicion, that public money is being misapplied or wasted.

When the House considered the report of the Court of Auditors a few weeks ago, deep concern was rightly expressed on all sides about the errors, the irregularity, the waste and the fraud which was evident on a disturbing scale in a number of the Community's financial affairs. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is not here at the moment, regaled us at length with examples earlier this evening. The extent to which the hon. Gentleman, in a long speech, relied precisely on the report of the Court of Auditors to which he now wishes to deny extra powers, appears to be a deep contradiction in his argument.

Some of that waste, irregularity and fraud is the responsibility of member states; some is the result of legislation that is unclear or inconsistent between member states, and some is the result of inadequate supervision by the Commission. Whatever the cause, it is wholly indefensible, and much more urgent and resolute action needs to be taken if it is to be rooted out. It is crucial to ensure that public money is not squandered or misappropriated, and to restore public confidence in the value of Community action and expenditure.

No one should underestimate the damage inflicted by irregularities, waste and fraud such as that identified in the Court of Auditors report. Despite the quality of the work of the Court of Auditors, if we recognise some of the limitations that the court identified on its own ability to investigate, we are left with the suspicion that only part of the problem has been uncovered in its report.

The real question before us tonight is how far the changes brought about by the Maastricht treaty assist the control and scrutiny of Community finances or whether they weaken it. Of course, they strengthen scrutiny and control and are to be welcomed.

The treaty provides in article 78c, which the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Stafford would delete, for the Commission to have

"regard to the principles of sound financial management."

That is straightforward common sense, but none the less it is important that it is enshrined in the treaty.

The treaty also states in article 160c:

"The Court of Auditors shall examine the accounts of all revenue and expenditure of . . . the Community"

and

"shall provide the European Parliament and the Council with a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions."

That is an important provision, which should usefully enhance the role and powers of the Court of Auditors.

It is particularly important, bearing in mind the fact that sources at the Court of Auditors were quoted in *The Guardian* of 27 November 1992 as saying:

"If we had to certify these accounts, we would not do so."

They were referring to the 1991 accounts on which the hon. Member for Stafford dwelt at such length.

Clearly, with the treaty in place, the auditors would have much more powerful leverage, first, to require accurate accounting information and, secondly, to insist that irregularities are ended and abuse stamped out. That requires action particularly by member states as well as by the Commission. That requirement, too, is strengthened in the treaty by the provisions of article 183a, which says:

"Member States shall take the same measures to counter fraud affecting the financial interests of the Community as they take to counter fraud affecting their own financial interests."

12.30 am

That can be taken to answer some of the concern that was expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham North-East (Mr. Leighton) about how far member states did not have an incentive to ensure financial probity when the only possible beneficiary was the Community. I do not draw such a sharp distinction between the interests of the member states and those of the Community. There is a commonality of interest here, and that is what the whole treaty and the process of integration is about. In this respect as well, the treaty takes steps to improve on the present unsatisfactory situation.

The powers of the European Parliament are also increased in the treaty in these matters. Article 180b, which the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Stafford would delete, requires the European Parliament to examine the financial statement and the annual report by the Court of Auditors and empowers it to call the Commission to account over its expenditure and financial control. The Commission is obliged by the article to submit all necessary information to the European Parliament at its request, to act on its observations, and to report on its observations, which reports will also go to the Court of Auditors. So, again, we see a tighter loop of financial control and democratic accountability being established.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Member is presenting a very favourable picture of the Maastricht treaty and the Court of Auditors, and about the extension of its powers. Will he comment on this quotation from a distinguished business man, a past director of N. M. Rothschild and Sons, a director of Jardine Matheson, Trafalgar House, Kwik Save and other companies, and a trustee of the Post Office pension fund—I quote precisely from his article:

"To travel round Europe is to realise that people everywhere have lost faith in their governments and the unaccountable bureaucracies which, dispensing 50 per cent. of each country's wealth, foster corruption, influence-peddling and inefficiency."

That is from a very respected business man with a considerable banking background, who has that view of the European Community. I particularly draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to his phrase in the article "fostering corruption".

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. That was a very long intervention.

Mr. Smith: I have already condemned the corruption in the Community, just as we all would. The thrust of my speech is to show how the provisions in the treaty strengthen the fight against such corruption, but the quotation the hon. Gentleman mentioned referred to more than 50 per cent. of expenditure, he said. Therefore, that could not have been referring to the Community budget, which is a mere 1 or 2 per cent. of the Community gross domestic product.

Mr. Winterton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to clarify precisely what Mr. Leach said. He talked about the Governments of the various countries that comprise the Community spending more than 50 per cent. of the product of their countries. That situation, fostering corruption, and with the bureaucracies of Europe, would further foster corruption, inefficiency and influence-peddling, to use the phrases that Mr. Leach used.

Mr. Smith: It seems to me that Mr. Leach was referring to an entirely different situation. He was questioning the share of GDP which goes on public expenditure. That is another matter which we could debate here at considerable length. It clearly was not referring to the scale of the Community budget, which nowhere near approaches the sort of figures that the hon. Member was referring to. In any event, to the extent that corruption is a problem, and to the extent that it is inadequately addressed within the Maastricht treaty—I would not claim that the treaty is perfect in this respect—the answer is to go further in tightening the scrutiny and accountability, not to eliminate from the treaty, as this group of amendments would do, the very proposals that have been agreed with our Community partners to try to improve matters.

As I was saying, the European Parliament has a part to play. It is an additional element of democratic accountability to the financial scrutiny and reporting provided in article 180b. Through the treaty, the responsibilities of the Court of Auditors, the member states and the Commission are strengthened in undertaking the task of monitoring expenditure and taking necessary corrective action.

Putting those provisions in the treaty and into law will not of itself guarantee that all irregularities, abuses and fraud in the EC budget are eliminated, but it provides the machinery through which they can be more readily tackled, and that is a significant step forward.

I have said that, on that and other matters, the treaty is far from perfect. It would have been good, for example, to see penalties set out for irregularities and fraud applied to member states, Community institutions and other responsible bodies. The need for those must be kept under review, depending on the experience of how much difference the provisions of the treaty make in practice. We urge the Government to impress on the Commission and other member states the importance we attach to the proper control and supervision of the budget.

In a number of important respects, achieving more effective Community expenditure will also require changes in policies as well as improvements in financial control and accountability. I need not rehearse the powerful arguments in favour of the fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy in respect of specific and flawed regimes, to some of which the hon. Member for Stafford referred. We think of the olive oil scheme in Corfu, when aid was paid for three times the amount produced. Nobody can condone such abuse. It is important that the schemes are themselves reformed or, if they cannot be reformed, abandoned, in addition to financial scrutiny and accountability being improved.

Mr. William Ross: As Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom with a land frontier, we have a particular interest in the amendment. I hope that the discussion goes on for some time, so that I have an opportunity to tell the Committee of some of the problems that are experienced across that land frontier. I also hope that, before he concludes, the hon. Gentleman will dwell on some of the problems that arise because of that land frontier with another state.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is far better qualified than I to comment on that issue. The general points I am making about the improvements provided for in the treaty and the ways in which they could be strengthened will be of assistance in that matter.

As I was saying about the CAP, not only must we reform the schemes, or abandon them if they are incapable of reform, but we must change the general philosophy of the CAP, because it has resulted in consumers and Governments subsidising even very profitable operations, thereby producing much more food than the Community needs or can sell at cost on world markets.

Considerations of common sense, efficiency in resource allocation and the realities of international competition

and co-operation will, sooner or later, force further reform of the CAP. We must do all we can to make sure that that happens sooner rather than later.

Mr. Lord: Is not one of the problems of the CAP and farming the fact that we, as a nation, are being penalised for our efficiency? When milk quotas were introduced into the Community, it was a matter of a modest amount of work for the Government to put them in place through the milk marketing boards, which quickly obeyed the rules and fell into line. The Italians do not know where their dairy farmers are, how many cows they have or which valley they are in. How on earth can such a system be monitored? Are we not trying to do the impossible?

Mr. Smith: I agree that we are to some extent paying the price of efficiency, but we are also paying the price for being late in signing up to the next stage in the development of closer Community co-operation. Another lesson that we should learn is that if we get in late and are forced to sign up to arrangements that have been shaped mainly by the influence of other member countries, they are likely to be arrangements which do not work especially to our advantage.

Mr. Lord: That point is frequently made but, in this instance, we are not late but are ahead of the rest of Europe. Our farming and farmers and the way in which we have organised our marketing are in many ways light years ahead of the rest of Europe. We and our farmers are being penalised for all the years of efficiency and hard work.

Mr. Smith: There is much in what the hon. Gentleman says, but what should concern us most in this debate is what can best be done about it. Should we turn our back on the Community as some people, such as the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), argue with great sincerity and vigour, or should we ensure that our voice is heard in all the deliberations on the Community's future and that our views and influence are taken seriously because we are seen and known to be wholehearted and sincere in our commitment to close European integration? Should we take the lead in setting the agenda so that issues such as the reform of the CAP will enable the rest of the European Community to catch up with the efficiency that our farmers have achieved?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, despite repeated attempts at reform, expenditure on the CAP is now far higher than it was last year or the year before and that the mountains of food are breaking all previous records? Would not it be far more realistic for the Labour party and the Government to accept the simple fact that there is no possibility of reforming the CAP under the present structure of the European Community? Would not it be much better to start with the assumption that it is a waste of time trying to reform it because it cannot and will not be reformed? If we started with that assumption, we might be able to get something done about it.

Mr. Smith: The problem with the hon. Gentleman's argument, on this as on other aspects of the treaty, is that he would abandon the mechanisms that we have, collectively and co-operatively, to bring about reform with our European partners. He would abandon them for a very uncertain future in which we are not even part of the Community and will clearly not be able to shape developments. He clearly prefers not to be a part of those developments. That is the sincere and strongly held view of a minority of hon. Members. I respect that view and am prepared to argue about it, but I favour working for closer co-operation between member states in order to deal with precisely those problems identified in the Court of Auditors' report and to bring about the fundamental reforms needed in, for example, the CAP. We shall be much better placed to do that if we are part of the process and framework established in the Maastricht treaty than if we abandon it.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman says that we should seek closer co-operation, but is he not forgetting what happened with the introduction of milk quotas? Milk farmers went to bed at night with a milk production that was worth absolutely nothing. Anyone could join in or leave without any financial consequences. They woke up in the morning owning something called a "milk quota" which, across the nation, must have had a value of countless millions of pounds. Was not that an obscenity, because overnight and out of thin air it created huge sums of money for farmers? Surely to heavens, the hon. Gentleman could not support any system that produced such a crazy idea. Why should we embark again on a path that we have followed so foolishly for so long?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman makes a persuasive case for reform, but I shall not be tempted into further debate of the details of the common agricultural policy. Suffice it to say that it will have to be changed sooner or later. Let us make it sooner. We shall secure change by building political support for further reform through the Community.

In these, as in other respects, the Maastricht treaty is, above all, a framework. What is made of the framework will depend upon political will and upon the determination of member states to ensure that, in the many respects in which action is needed for the purpose of securing effective budgetary and other policies, appropriate action is taken. I believe that the provisions of the treaty make that more, rather than less, likely.

For these reasons, Opposition Members are certainly unable to support the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Stafford and his hon. Friends.

12.45 am

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:——

The Committee divided: Ayes 269, Noes 56.

Division No. 220] **[12.45 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Bates, Michael
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Batiste, Spencer
Aitken, Jonathan	Bellingham, Henry
Alexander, Richard	Beresford, Sir Paul
Alton, David	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Amess, David	Booth, Hartley
Ancram, Michael	Boswell, Tim
Arbuthnot, James	Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Bowden, Andrew
Ashby, David	Bowis, John
Aspinwall, Jack	Brandreth, Gyles
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Brazier, Julian
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Bright, Graham
Baldry, Tony	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Browning, Mrs. Angela

Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Body, Sir Richard
Budgen, Nicholas
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
McMaster, Gordon
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Mudie, George
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Watson, Mike
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Teddy Taylor and
Mr. Christopher Gill.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 37, Noes 263.

Division No. 221] **[1 am**

AYES

Bennett, Andrew F.
Body, Sir Richard
Budgen, Nicholas
Cann, Jamie
Cash, William
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Jessel, Toby
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lord, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Watson, Mike
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Sir Russell Johnston: I beg to move amendment No. 96, in page 1, line 9 leave out 'and IV' and insert 'IV and VII'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following: New clause 14 —*Amendment of protocols*—

'No notification shall be given that the United Kingdom assents to the amendment of any part of any Protocol annexed to the Treaty on European Union (whether or not it is also annexed to any other Treaty) unless a draft of the notification has first been approved by Act of Parliament.'.

New clause 30—*Revisions of the Treaty (No. 2)*—

'The Secretary of State shall, whenever proposals are made, or are to be made (whether by the Commission or the United Kingdom or another Member State of the Union), under Article B in Title I of the Maastricht Treaty for revision of the policies and forms of co-operation introduced by the *Treaty*—

(a) lay before Parliament a report setting out the nature of the proposals and their potential effect on the interests and obligations of the United Kingdom, and

(b) so far as is practicable, secure that the United Kingdom's conduct of the negotiations on the proposals is in accordance with Parliament's opinion of them, as manifested in the form of Resolution, enactment or otherwise.'.

1.15 am

Sir Russell Johnston: The Committee will——

Mr. Cryer: I think that the hon. Gentleman is the thickie who has fixed all this up. He does not have a brain cell between his ears——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order.

Sir Russell Johnston: If you have any opportunity to eject the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), Dame Janet, I think that you should take it.

Mr. Cryer: She cannot do that in Committee.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hour may be late, but it is no excuse for bad manners.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Committee will recall that our first debate, 19 days past, was on a Liberal Democrat amendment to the effect that title I should be incl:uded in the Bill. The argument for including title VII is substantially the same; it is to bind more closely together than the Government would wish the pillared, intergovernmental structure of Maastricht and the supranational institutions of the Community. In fact, it would move things in a federalist direction. The Minister of State accepted that in the debate on title I on 1 December. I remind him that on that occasion he said:

"There are two sides to the amendment. The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber replied frankly when the hon. Member for Leicester, South said, rightly, that the purpose of the structure of the treaty—this is at the centre of the Government's negotiating position and I believe that the Opposition are not unsupportive of that position—is to separate out common foreign and security policy, and interior justice policy, and to make them separate intergovernmental pillars and not part of the treaty of Rome . . . The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber replied, perfectly frankly—this is the position of the Liberal Democrats and will come as no surprise to anyone—that he indeed wanted to bring those areas of intergovernmental activity into the treaty of Rome. He wants a single structure—what we here have come to call a federal state."

He later remarked more briefly:

"There are also a number of people in Europe who share the federal views held by the Liberal party. That is why, in the course of the negotiations leading up to the treaty, the Dutch Government sought to introduce a unitary text that would indeed have made all these matters areas where the Commission had the sole right of initiative; and would have made all the areas that we will discuss in Committee justiciable by the European Court of Justice."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 181-86.]

The trouble with the Minister is that, while he understands that the Liberal Democrats would have preferred Maastricht to produce a single structure rather than a pillared structure, as it is described, he does not understand what the word federal means. I say that in all friendliness. He has demonstrated that many times in Committee. I see that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is obtaining paper so that he can take notes. I remember that the Minister of State and I had a series of exchanges one night, although I cannot remember which one. I also remember that on 26 June 1991 I quoted the Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl—the quotation is not very long, but it is exceedingly clear—speaking on 27 May when he accepted a doctorate at Edinburgh university, saying:

"Thinking as a European and being firmly rooted in one's own native soil, I am convinced that in order to succeed, Europe will have to learn to live by the motto of 'Unity in Diversity' . . . a very sound and pragmatic structural principle of the sort of federal system we have in mind for Europe. Europe will be a federal Europe—it will not be a unitary Europe."—[*Official Report*, 26 June 1991; Vol. 193, c. 1032.]

It can hardly be clearer than that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman will recall that when he quoted me I referred to what we have "come to call" federalism in Britain. Of course, I recognise that the word "federal" can mean whatever anyone wants it to mean. I think that in Britain the shorthand meaning of the word "federal" is a unitary structure. That is something that the intergovernmental pillars have arrested.

Sir Russell Johnston: That is what we call beating on a closed door. During such education as I succeeded in obtaining at Edinburgh university, the word "federal" certainly did not mean what the Minister has described it as meaning—nor does it have that meaning in any of the states described as federal states anywhere in the world.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is not the root of the word "federal" the same as that for the word "treaty"?

Sir Russell Johnston: The answer is, frankly, that I do not know. It may be true, but I am not sure of its relevance even if it is.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the hon. Gentleman going to enlighten me?

Mr. Winnick: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is happy to discuss the matter at this hour or whether it is any consolation to him to know that those of us who are critical of the treaty believe that it is the road to a federal set-up, and that what Chancellor Kohl said is true. Although the Government keep on denying that here, if the treaty is passed it will undoubtedly lead to the sort of federal Europe of which the hon. Gentleman is so passionately fond, which should please him.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said.

The amendment, arguing as it does for the incorporation of title VII, gives me the opportunity to stress that federalism is about decentralisation and the entrenchment of subsidiarity, not about centralisation. Federalism is about limiting central power.

Article N of title VII is particularly important as it specifically requires that an intergovernmental conference will be convened in 1996

"to examine those provisions of this Treaty for which revision is provided".

The various subjects are listed in the fourth annex, but I shall discuss the fact that the provision provides the Government with an opportunity both to involve national Parliaments directly in discussion and to look beyond the narrow requirements to the need to develop a more open constitution for the Community.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) will remember the assize in Rome to which we both proceeded in December 1990. Despite all the criticisms to which it was subjected, particularly by some Euro-sceptics among the British delegation, I believe that it was a truly remarkable occasion, on which it was demonstrated that there was considerable common ground. The assize has not met again since, although I believe that it was agreed that it should meet before now. When the Minister has finished consulting the wise men in the Box, I hope that he will take the opportunity to tell us why that is so.

My main point, however, is that many Members in this Chamber and in others in different parts of the Community understandably complain that national Parliaments are being side-tracked in the development of European policy and have no opportunity to make an input. It seems to me that the 1996 intergovernmental conference creates an opportunity for the United Kingdom to take an initiative whereby national Parliaments—along with Members of the European Parliament, the Commission, Governments and, indeed, observers from applicant countries—could participate directly in an open investigation of the best democratic structure of the future enlarged and enlarging Community. There is no doubt that, whatever side of the argument we take, the nature of democracy in the Community provides no satisfaction.

Mr. Corbyn: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has come round to admitting that the Maastricht treaty, as it is now constituted, will not lead to greater democracy in western Europe. Why, then, is the hon. Gentleman supporting the treaty, if the best he can offer is a conference in three years' time which may or may not decide on a system imposing greater accountability on the Commission and European institutions?

Sir Russell Johnston: With respect, it is not a question of admitting anything. My hon. Friends and I have said the same from the outset. Of course the Maastricht treaty is not perfect. Of course there is a considerable democratic deficit. We support the treaty because we think that it is the best, most balanced negotiated agreement that could have been achieved at the time, and that it would cause great instability in the whole Community—and the whole of Europe, for that matter—if it collapsed. That is not to say that we do not seek to improve things; the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) surely accepts that we never cease to do that.

I do not want to talk about defence again, as we talked about it all afternoon, but it is one of the items mentioned in annexe 4. The Western European Union is now developing a specific role in the Community, so perhaps this is the time to ask whether the existence of a parliamentary advisory assembly in the WEU presents a further opportunity for representatives of national Parliaments to make a direct input into Community decision making as the WEU extends its role, without necessarily affecting the balance of the institutions as such.

I seriously ask the Government to consider those possibilities. I do not think that we should close our minds to any way of providing a better opportunity for elected representatives to express their views within the Community or even on its margins The institutionalisation of the parliamentary assembly of the WEU, for instance, could be compared with the provision for a Committee of the Regions: it is a parallel organisation, although it will not necessarily be at the heart of the institutions, the Commission, Parliament, Council and Court.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman make it abundantly clear that the Committee of the Regions has no power to do anything, no budget of its own and has to share its secretariat? All that it can do is to pass motions which will no doubt be approved and are said to be very helpful by members of the Commission.

Sir Russell Johnston: The fact that the hon. Gentleman asks me to set the record straight suggests that I made it crooked in the first place, which I did not. Of course the Committee of the Regions is an advisory body; the hon. Gentleman is quite correct. Indeed, the Parliamentary Assembly of the WEU, with which I compared it, is an advisory body of exactly the same kind.

I say this to the hon. Gentleman seriously, although it is difficult to be serious at this time of night. Surely a parliamentarian does not deprecate the opportunity to express a view to the Government of the day, to set out what one wants to happen and perhaps—or perhaps not, of course—to influence people. That is what politics and democracy are about.

Mr. Spearing: Inadvertently, the hon. Gentleman may have illustrated a fundamental difference of opinion between various hon. Members. He asks for the opportunity to express a view, to have a say, to influence, to cajole, to request. That role has a place in a democracy. Does he not agree, however, that in this Parliament at least parliamentarians believe that a proper Parliament has the power, in the end, either to support or to defeat an Administration and to decide its own taxation, legislation and government? The hon. Gentleman suggests that the various assemblies and groups that he has mentioned, including the assize, should be a sort of public echo chamber and not what we understand to be a Parliament in a democratic country—one which decides the Administration and can destroy it at will, if it so wishes.

1.30 am

Sir Russell Johnston: I have heard that story before. I do not deny what the hon. Gentleman has said many times. *[Interruption.]* I am not making a direct comparison—*[Interruption.]*—between existing——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. If the two hon. Gentlemen on the Front Benches wish to have a private conversation, perhaps they would go outside and have it.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to you, Dame Janet.

I was saying that I am not making a direct comparison between existing national Parliaments and the Community institutions, which are in a state of evolution. A national Parliament is, in a way, a finished product. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not making that comparison.

I should appreciate it if the Minister would explain whether the changes made under article O, which is concerned with applicant countries, provide a new opportunity for applicant members to become involved in aspects of the union without taking on the full responsibilities of the union and becoming full members. We are talking about this pillared structure. If one goes to eastern Europe at the moment—for instance, to Poland—they say again and again that what they are most concerned about is the achievement of greater security. Is there any possibility under the new arrangements whereby Poland might, for example, be able to join WEU or be associated with the common foreign and security policy without necessarily becoming a full member?

The hour is late. I do not intend to detain the Committee further, nor do I propose to press the matter to a Division. Despite what the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said, I am satisfied that these issues are discussed in a progressive way. My view is different from that which is held by many, but I believe that it is right.

We are not yet at the end of this long process. Hon. Members may, however, be encouraged by the words at the end of title VII, which is headed "Final Provisions." The final words read:

"Done at Maastricht on the seventh day of February in the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety-two. [Here follow the signatures]."

The end is nigh.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I thank the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) for indicating to the Committee that in a sense this is a probing amendment that he does not intend to press to a Division. The amendment seeks to include the provisions of title VII of the treaty—that is, the final provisions—within clause 1(1) of the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman told the Committee, it is similar to other amendments that have been tabled by the Liberal Democrats which seek to incorporate into our law more of the treaty than the Bill itself does.

The cumulative effect of the amendments that have been tabled by the Liberal Democrats would be—some of them, the Committee will recall, have already been negatived—to list more or less the whole of the Maastricht treaty as a Community treaty for the purposes of section 1 of the European Communities Act 1972.

Members of the Committee will now be familiar with the reasons why the Bill incorporates only titles II, III and IV of the Maastricht treaty, and the other provisions only "so far as they relate to those Titles".

It is a course that the Committee has been round before. Nevertheless, perhaps I ought to explain briefly the structure as it relates to title VII, which is the subject of this amendment.

It is, as the Committee will be aware, necessary, before the Government may ratify this treaty, to incorporate into our domestic law those provisions of the Community treaties under which Community rights and obligations effective in this country arise. This is done by listing them in clause 1(1), with the result that they fall within the definition of the Community treaties for the purposes of the European Communities Act 1972 and may be implemented through that Act.

The intergovernmental provisions of the treaty—that is, titles V and VI—are therefore not included within clause 1(1). These parts of the Maastricht treaty do not provide a basis for the adoption of Community legislation. They neither give rise to rights or obligations under Community law, nor amend the Community treaties.

The provisions of title I, the common provisions, and title VII, the final provisions, fall into what I might define as a grey area. While they do not themselves directly form a basis for the adoption of Community legislation, they nevertheless in some cases relate to other provisions of Community treaties which can give rise to Community rights and obligations. In some cases, they directly amend the Community treaties. Hence it is necessary to give these provisions effect in our domestic legislation as well. This is achieved in the phrase contained in clause 1(1) of the Bill, which says:

"together with other provisions of the Treaty so far as they relate to those Titles"—

that is, titles II, III and IV.

All the provisions in title VII, the subject of the amendment of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, relate to a greater or lesser extent to the provisions of the Community treaties in this way and are therefore already included in clause 1(1). Article L, for example, deals with the extent of the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice, which is clearly relevant to the operation of the Community treaties. Article L is therefore included so far as it relates to titles II to IV. Part of article L, however—hon. Members pointed this out when we debated this subject—paragraph (b), relates to title V. So that would be included under this formula.

Article M——

Sir Richard Body: Before my right hon. Friend leaves article L——

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I can just finish this, of course, I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Article M describes how the union treaty affects the Community treaties. It is also included in the scope of the Bill. So are articles N on treaty amendment and O on accession, and I will just respond to the specific point that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber made.

Article O makes it explicit that new members may join only the union, not just the Community, thereby committing themselves to accepting the whole of the CFSP and interior justice chapters. The question that the hon. Member posed approached it from the other end, as it were: would it be possible in the future, perhaps, for potential member states—I dare say he was thinking of countries in eastern Europe—to accede to, say, just the intergovernmental pillar? That is an interesting subject for discussion that might arise at some point in the future.

I do not think that I can say any more than that, but it is an interesting thought and one that those of us in this country, at any rate, who are anxious to encourage and consolidate the democratic processes in those eastern European countries might look on with sympathy. The provisions that I have just listed relate to the treaty of

Rome and the other Community treaties which may be amended under article O, or to which new members may accede under article R.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) in a moment and then I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

As titles V and VI can also be amended and would also be acceded to, it was appropriate to include them, using the "so far as they relate" formula rather than in an unqualified way. Similar considerations apply to articles P, Q, R and S, which all apply to titles II to IV and titles V and VI.

Sir Richard Body: Let me take my hon. Friend back to article L. Is it not the case that article L extends the powers of the European Court of Justice and that, if the Council of Ministers agrees upon any conventions, it will be within the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice to interpret the meaning of that convention? Could that not have far-reaching consequences for Britain and for the House?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not think so. My hon. Friend raises an important point, and I shall try to respond to it.

Article L specifically excludes from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice all areas of the treaty except, first, those covered by the treaty of Rome, the ECSC and the Euratom treaty as amended here, and secondly, by article K.3(2)(c) on interior justice, which allows member states to give the European Court of Justice an interpretation role in international conventions if they choose to do so. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) raised the same point in an earlier debate.

Of course, I accept that, if member states chose to do so, they could seek the opinion of the European Court of Justice on international conventions.

Mr. Corbyn: I am glad that the Minister referred to articles N and O of title VII. Article O, on potential new members, states:

"The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded which such admission entails shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant States."

It does not spell out, and the Minister has not mentioned exactly, what criteria are to be used for the admission of new member states to the Community. Is there to be a judgment on their economy, the methods of ownership, social ownership or otherwise of their economies, their constitutional arrangements or the checks and balances in their constitution? The Minister should spell those things out.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Most hon. Members will know that the broad and quick answer to the question is that any applicant state must be prepared to accept in full what is known as the acquis communautaire. It is also accepted that any applicant member state should be what the other member states, including ourselves, would regard as a properly functioning democracy. Thereafter, the details would be a matter of negotiation. We are about to embark on three or four negotiations, and there are individual areas where some members states may seek derogations.

Mr. Budgen: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make a little more progress, and then I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

When the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber proposed a similar amendment earlier in the Committee stage, I said that I found its purpose difficult to discern. Those parts of the provisions of title VII which need to be incorporated into our domestic law will be so incorporated by the passage of the Bill. To include the whole title without qualification would, it seems to me—again this is a point that I made in an earlier debate—blur the distinction between the Community proper and the intergovernmental pillars of the union.

1.45 am.

It is only those Maastricht treaty provisions relating to the European Community treaties, to the adoption of Community law and to the creation of Community rights and obligations which require legislative backing.

I repeat what I said earlier, that it seems to me bizarre to wish to include in our law more than is strictly necessary. There is only one plausible reason that I can think of to change the face of our legislation.

I accept, without getting into the theological debate about what the word "federalism" may or may not mean, that the Liberal Democrats have always been quite open with the country that they favour a more unifying treaty —let us call it that—and no doubt would have supported the text advanced by the Dutch Government in the course of the Maastricht negotiations. I think that the fact that the Liberal Members should be putting forward this more centralised structure fits perfectly well with the position that they have held for a very long time on the European Community.

I think that I am right in saying and no doubt, when the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) catches your eye, Dame Janet, if he is fortunate enough to do so, he will probably confirm, that the Opposition also believe in a more intergovernmental structure——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will give way when I have finished this passage. The official Opposition believe in a more intergovernmental structure, rather than the single structure that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber is seeking to advance. I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-West.

Mr. Budgen: I am sorry to intervene at this point, but it is not my choice that I should do so. My hon. Friend was, a few moments ago, dealing with the question of accession. The Government have been very eloquent in talking about the reality of extending the Community, but is the position that eastern European countries will have to conform to the proposals for monetary union before they can join the Community? It is surely the grossest hypocrisy for the Community to say on the one hand, "You may join us," and on the other hand, "You may join us only if you agree to conform to monetary union." It is obvious that none of the applicant countries will be able to do that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not want to engage in a debate on hypocrisy with my hon. Friend. Suffice it to say that the four members of the European Free Trade Area have judged that they wish to accede to the Community on the basis of the Maastricht acquisition. All the countries in eastern Europe wish eventually to join the European Community, and if and when they make an application,

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

the conditions that apply to their application will be the same as the conditions that apply to present applicants —that they will have to be prepared to accept the full Community acquisition at the time of their application.

I do not want to anticipate what the full Community acquis may be in the year 2000, but if applications were to come forward from eastern European countries at that time, I think that they would be expected to take on the full acquis as are existing members.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I do not want to disturb this happy cordiality, which has got the hon. Lady the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) in such a state of excitement. I cannot help but reflect that some people could die in here and we would not know until they started to smell.

The Minister said that the Opposition favoured a more intergovernmental form of treaty. He is right. We favour intergovernmentalism where it makes sense, but we are not in the business of making the sort of ludicrous gestures that the Government make when they negotiate valiantly, in effect, to remove the words "federal structure" or "federal vocation" and replace them with "ever closer union" and come to the House of Commons in the dead of night and try to pretend that they stand by, and have never departed from, the essential principle of intergovernmentalism.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman will tell the Committee the Opposition's view of the amendment if or when he has an opportunity to speak. I stand by the position that the new structure of the union represents a holding back—I would not put it higher than that; I do not think I have done so at any stage—of the centripetal forces that have driven the Community over the past 25 or 30 years. I think that the intergovernmental structure is supported by the Opposition.

The only plausible reason I can think of to change the face of our legislation would be to give the impression that, in our law, we regard the distinction between the Community treaty structure and the intergovernmental pillars as meaningless. As I said, I think that some Opposition Members wish that we had a single structure, so I understand why the amendment has been moved. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber for saying that he would not be pressing it to a Division. As he knows, his view is not shared on any other Bench in the Committee.

Mr. Rowlands: The provisions in title VII, which the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) wishes to incorporate into our domestic legislation, include a number of matters; the one on which the Minister concentrated, and with which I begin, is article N.2:

"A conference of representatives of the governments of the Member States shall be convened in 1996 to examine those provisions of this Treaty for which revision is provided, in accordance with the objectives set out in Articles A and B."

I hope that, as we debate the amendment, the Minister will identify the provisions in the treaty for which revision is being provided in accordance with objectives A and B.

Mr. Spearing: I have glanced at that part of the treaty to which my hon. Friend refers and have marked it "open-ended?" because that seems the only interpretation to put on the words, for A and B set out great principles and the words seem to allow for the revision of any provision in the treaty.

Mr. Rowlands: It is open-ended in that sense, in that article N.2 makes a clear reference to the objectives in articles A and B. Let us remind ourselves of those objectives. They are to promote social progress, strengthen economic and social cohesion, establish economic and monetary union.

"including a single currency in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty . . . to assert its identity on the international scene . . . which might in time lead to"

the implementation of a common foreign and security policy, and to the

"framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence".

So, if we want to discover what will be the agenda for the 1996 conference, we must look first at the objectives in article B.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question specifically. Five areas are specified for review in 1996: energy, civil protection and tourism, the legislative powers of the European Parliament, the CFSP and defence.

Mr. Rowlands: That is a pretty comprehensive list. I have identified the specific part of the treaty which says that the common foreign and security policy must be on the agenda. The agenda for the 1996 conference, set out in title VII, is enormous. Throughout our debates, the Government have tried to persuade us that the conference will be neutral and that it will perhaps claw back responsibility for each of the five aspects to the nation state or that it will further enhance the principle of subsidiarity. The Minister nods his head as if that is the case, but the language describing the agenda of the conference is not the language of clawing back but that of proceeding from the bridgeheads established in the treaty towards a futher set of objectives.

No one can read article B, which sets out the objectives of the next conference, and believe anything other than that the intention is to build on the bridgeheads established in the treaty and to move to full monetary union, a single currency and a common foreign policy and a common defence policy. It is impossible to read the language of article B, which refers specifically to article N and the agenda for the 1996 conference, and then say, as the Minister has, that the conference will be neutral. It is a conference designed to carry forward the objectives outlined in article B.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is nonsense to suggest, as some of the most distinguished Government spokesmen have, that we should ratify the treaty and then rectify all the mistakes at the next conference? It is clear that the next conference will be merely a continuation of the defects of the present treaty.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman makes an important and valid point. One of the most forceful arguments put to us in the Select Committee was that we should close our eyes, hold our nose and sign the treaty because it is such a mess and so badly flawed that we shall have to unravel it. Presumably the 1996 conference can do that.

The person who said that in his evidence was Lord Lawson of Blaby, who made a remarkable analysis of the

treaty. He destroyed almost all of it, with a rational and perceptive assessment of how the so-called ERM should never have been a glide path to full monetary union, and how it had collapsed because it was now being used for that purpose. He made a devastating indictment of the treaty's provisions for EMU. He also argued strenuously that, on political grounds, the only logical conclusion of the treaty was a fully fledged European state and Government, which was the only way to make sense of giving such powers to bankers and the only way in which the EMU provisions would work. In the end, the noble Lord said that we might as well ratify the treaty because it would be unravelled. No one believes that that is the objective of the 1996 conference as characterised throughout the treaty, particularly in article N.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend agree that this treaty hands power to bankers, bureaucrats and generals and that nowhere in article B, which is apparently to be the agenda for dealing, in three years' time, with the inadequacies of the treaty, is there any mention of the lack of accountability on the part of the people who are to decide policy in the Community? Nowhere is there a reference to the question of the social policies of the Community as a whole, the condition of the people as a whole, or the state of the environment as a whole. We have only a proposal that all this might be dealt with in three years' time, with no thought whatsoever for the principal objection to the treaty—the complete lack of any democratic accountability in the case of the Community's institutions.

2 am

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend's analysis of the totally undemocratic nature of the institutions that are being established is absolutely right. There is a notion, for example, that the 1996 conference will undertake a democratic revision of the statutes of the nascent European central bank. By that time, we shall be in the latter part of the stage 2 process, and heading very rapidly for the establishment of the central bank. The statutes will have been drafted in the most marvellously rational, but unaccountable and undemocratic, way. The notion that we shall sit down in 1996 and unravel the protocol defies belief, not just by hon. Members but by anybody who has read the treaty.

Mr. George Robertson: I fear that my hon. Friend may have left the entertaining subject of the ruminations of the Lord Lawson of Blaby. Why, when we did not believe a single word that Nigel Lawson said in this Chamber, should we believe everything he says now that he has moved to the House of Lords?

Mr. Rowlands: I did not intend to give the impression that I believed every word he says. I referred to his rather impressive analysis of what has gone wrong with the processes. In this debate, we find ourselves in strange company. Indeed, my hon. Friend has found himself in very strange company for most of the time. What I find convincing is Lord Lawson's very simple proposition to the Select Committee that a single currency could be made acceptable only through the establishment of a democratically elected European super-Government. But the noble Lord argued that we should carry on supporting the treaty.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I very much regret that I am no longer a colleague of the hon. Gentleman on the Select Committee which discusses these very important matters —more important than the funding of political parties, which my own Select Committee is about to address. Does the hon. Gentleman know that Lord Lawson of Blaby is not the only person who takes this view? I have spent quite some time discussing Maastricht with my colleagues, and I have found that the overwhelming view is that the treaty will not work, that the whole thing is an utter mess and a complete failure.

The only purpose of voting for the ratification of Maastricht is to ensure that the French, the Germans and our other European colleagues will not point at us as the reason for the failure of the treaty. It seems to me that that is a totally unsatisfactory and immoral reason for supporting a treaty that will give the powers of the elected members of the Westminster Parliament to an unelected bureaucracy in Brussels. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Mr. Rowlands: I shall vote as I have done throughout the Committee. I do not believe that there is anything democratic about the provisions in the treaty in relation to fundamental aspects of the issues that will affect my constituency.

I want to make one point on a matter of dispute between ourselves and the Minister. I hope that those on our Front Bench will support our view that the 1996 conference will not be neutral. The agenda will not allow us, as it were, to roll back further the powers of the central forces of the system. On any objective reading of parts of the text of the treaty, there can be only a one-way process in 1996. Having already identified the first two clearly defined objectives in article B, I will shortly draw attention to another objective which, by any stretch of the imagination and by any interpretation, can mean only one thing at the 1996 conference.

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Gentleman deal with the state of opinion within his party? My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) drew attention to the state of opinion in the Tory party. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) may have read the significant article in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) in which he described the proposals for monetary union as having already failed and having already been a nonsense. Also, with all the dignity and importance of having been a successful chairman of the Tory party, he described the way in which trouble had been brewed between Tory Members of Parliament and their constituency associations with a very important word, "shameful"——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I do not recollect any reference to title VII in that article.

Mr. Rowlands: I do not want to cross you, Mr. Morris, so I will not pursue the issue raised by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). It is for us to discusss among ourselves how we relate within our parties.

I want to confine myself to the text of the treaty. We have had to deal with the Bill in a curious way. Normally in Committee one deals with the text of a Bill, but we have had to use the text of the treaty. The aim of the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and

[Mr. Rowlands]

Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is to incorporate part of the text of the treaty in the Bill. Therefore, we have to consider the text.

The first part of the text concerned the proposal in title VII to hold a conference. My argument is that the conference will not be a neutral way to go forward. I was about to draw to the attention of hon. Members the fifth indent of article B, which relates not only to a general objective but specifically to article N(2) in title VII. So here we have a direct and clear linkage between title VII and article B. Let me remind the Committee of its terms:

"to maintain in full the 'acquis communautaire' and build on it with a view of considering, through the procedure referred to in Article N(2), to what extent the policies and forms of co-operation introduced by this Treaty may need to be revised with the aim of ensuring the effectiveness of the mechanisms and the institutions of the Community."

I think that we all, even including the Minister, agree that the "acquis communautaire" is the central core of the Community. The supra-society was intended to roll back the "acquis communautaire" in one way or another. The 1996 conference is designed not to roll it back, but to build upon it. The provision in article B is directly related to N(2) in article 7 and the Minister cannot interpret that as anything other than what the conference intends—to build heavily upon the "acquis communautaire" and the new bridgeheads that the treaty will establish.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is giving his opinion, to which he is entitled. Let us look at the experience of the treaty. How many member states does the hon. Gentleman think entered the Maastricht negotiation in the belief and hope that the ensuing treaty would contain the intergovernmental structure? I shall tell him. One member state did that—the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rowlands: I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman and the Government if, single-handedly, they managed to create the intergovernmental pillar, of which I approve. However, I am reading the price that they paid for that. I spent four and a half years in the best drafting school that I have ever attended—the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I do not know whether I was a good pupil, but I was certainly a willing one. I recognise drafting when I see it, and I also recognise compromises. The watermark of compromise runs through every article, provision and protocol of the treaty.

One of the problems in the Committee has been the two-faced nature of the treaty. The intergovernmental pillar was a significant achievement for the Government, but the price they paid was having to leave language in the treaty that is capable of being interpreted as meaning the opposite. Title I has a paragraph that could be interpreted as relating to subsidiarity, while the next paragraph seems to favour centralising. I know all about the struggle and exhaustion of negotiations, because I was involved in extensive and tricky negotiations over the Falklands, Belize and southern Africa. One always remembers the watermark compromises in such negotiations.

The treaty is a particularly gruesome example of watermark compromises. Those compromises show, because the text was not cleaned up after each compromise was agreed. Almost every article is capable of being interpreted in contradictory and diametrically opposed terms. The bridgeheads established in many of the articles and protocols to gain the intergovernmental pillar are aimed in the other direction. Article N.2 purposefully drives forward the other face of the treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion. He says that the centripetal thrust of the Community is irreversible. The lie to that case is in the Maastricht treaty itself.

First of all, he has accepted that the overwhelming majority of the states taking part in the negotiation would perhaps have wished to see a unitary structure of the kind that the hon. Member wants, and also the subsidiarity clause, article 3b, was principally pushed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom. Those two—I could list many more—are instances where the case that he is putting forward has been proven by the Maastricht negotiation not to be so.

Mr. Rowlands: All the Minister is saying is that it is my judgment versus his judgment. He has not challenged me on the text. Does he argue that indent 5—

"to maintain in full the 'acquis communautaire' and build on it"—

is anything but the language of furthering and developing the essentially centralising nature of the treaty? Is he saying that that is neutral language?

2.15 am

Mr. Garel-Jones: Indeed I am saying that. Building on the Maastricht acquis, as we interpret it, means consolidating the pillared structure of the union and ensuring that article 3b is rigorously applied right across every section of Community activity. That is what I regard as consolidating the existing treaty.

Mr. Rowlands: We are not going to make much progress if we can abuse or misinterpret language in that way.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): My hon. Friend refers to the fifth indent. The last sentence gives the lie to what the Minister of State was saying, because the aim is to ensure "the effectiveness of the mechanisms and the institutions of the Community."

They are making absolutely sure that they are at this conference and that they will get more power as a result.

Mr. Rowlands: That is the case that I have been making, and my right hon. Friend has underlined it. I had not reached that last line, but I am very grateful to him for doing it for me. Does the Minister believe that those words are neutral? I think that we will not get very far if words can be used like that.

Mr. Davies: English is his second language. That is why I understand it.

Mr. Rowlands: Let me ask the Minister of State whether the language is neutral throughout the treaty. What about this one? Is this neutral language? The protocol on the transition to the third stage of economic and monetary union says:

"THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES declare the irreversible character of the Community's movement to the third stage of Economic and Monetary Union . . . Therefore all Member States shall, whether they fulfil the necessary conditions for the adoption of a single currency or not, respect the will for the Community to enter swiftly into the third stage".

Is that the language of a neutral process that is going to go on until 1996 and beyond? I know that one

Government can opt out of it, but that is the language of a treaty that we are endorsing. It is a protocol, incidentally, that will go into our domestic legislation. This protocol is not left out of the title—it is within titles II to IV. It will turn up in our domestic legislation under this Bill. I ask the Minister—I now invite him to interrupt—does he believe that that protocol should become part of our domestic legislation?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Member—this is a matter for the Chair—is now discussing a part of the Bill that is not the subject of the amendment that we are talking about. I believe, Mr. Morris, that we are talking about the amendment. He is now referring to stage 3 of economic and monetary union, and he is well aware that the British Government have an opt-out to that part of the treaty.

Mr. Rowlands: Is not that protocol, under this Bill, going to become part of our domestic legislation? Yes or no?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes.

Mr. Rowlands: It is. So the language of this protocol will become part of our domestic legislation, and this is not some new bridgehead, this is not to be carried further to 1996 and beyond?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Is not the real point that, although my right hon. Friend the Minister says that the proper interpretation of these measures is that consolidation will happen in 1996 and the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Herr Kohl, says that these measures are but a stepping stone to a united states of Europe, under title VII the decision as to what these measures mean lies not with my right hon. Friend the Minister or with Chancellor Kohl but with the European Court of Justice? The European Court of Justice has declared time and again that it is the instrument not of the nation state but of the union, whose objectives it intends to advance. That means that what will be brought to bear upon us in the end is not my right hon. Friend's reasonable intrepretation of those words, but that of Chancellor Kohl—that the measures are a stepping stone to the united states of Europe. That is what we have all been saying, from start to finish of our proceedings.

Mr. Rowlands: I understand the thrust of the hon. and learned Gentleman's intervention.

May I test the Minister on another form of words in the treaty, and find out whether he can again argue that the 1996 conference will be neutral, as he has suggested? I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to article J.4(6), which contains another specific reference to article N.2 and therefore to the agenda and the issues that will be before the conference:

"With a view to furthering the objective of this Treaty, and having in view the date of 1998 in the context of Article XII of the Brussels Treaty, the provisions of this Article may be revised as provided for in Article N.2 on the basis of a report to be presented in 1996."

What will be put on the agenda in 1996 under that provision in that article? We need to read back and find out what the previous paragraphs suggest, which is to elaborate and introduce

"the . . . framing of a common defence policy, which might . . . lead to a common defence."

The Minister has already admitted that the common foreign and security policy will be part and parcel of the agenda for 1996; that has been laid down. It is a treaty obligation that the conference will deal with those issues —and it is not merely a general obligation. Paragraph 6 of article J.4 specifically states that the objectives in the previous paragraphs of the article will be on that agenda, and the central objective in those paragraphs is the framing of a common defence policy leading to a common defence.

What does the Minister believe about that? He could, rightly, say that in 1996 we shall be there, and we shall veto, impede and obstruct any progress that might be made at the conference. I could understand that that might be the Government's position, but the Minister cannot deny that, if we accept title VII and a 1996 conference on those terms, we shall build into our processes a further bridgehead for negotiating towards the framing of a common defence policy and a common defence provision. That is included in article B as a general objective, and it is specifically included in article J.4, especially in paragraph 6, as part of the agenda for the 1996 conference.

The Minister may say that we can turn up to the conference and try to throw as many spanners into the works as we can, and obstruct and create problems, drag our heels, shout, scream and even use our veto—we have the power of veto, although I shall have something to say about that in a moment—but all I ask him to admit is that, if we accept the 1996 conference in the terms described in the treaty, we shall have to defend and fight and scream against the process written into the treaty, which the 1996 conference and its agenda are designed to further.

Why do we not now say that we do not wish to go down those roads in that way, so we should not allow article N.2 of title VII to become part of our domestic legislation?

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) had little to complain about in terms of the British Government's attitude towards a federal Europe? The hon. Gentleman was perfectly honest, unlike many of those who are in favour of the treaty. He has made it clear that he is totally in favour of a federal Europe. My hon. Friend is confirming that the 1996 conference will take the member states along the very road that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber wants. It is the road that will ultimately lead to a federal Europe, whatever the Minister and Opposition spokesmen may say and however much the word "federal" is not included in the treaty. It will be a federal Europe in the sense in which we understand the word.

Mr. Rowlands: I also fear that that is the end game. It is openly admitted and fairly frequently embraced in one form or another by hon. Members. We should puncture the pretence of Ministers and of Opposition spokesmen that that is not the end game and that that is not the agenda of the 1996 conference, especially when many of the objectives and the detailed processes by which the end game will be achieved are written into the treaty.

I listened with great interest to the Foreign Secretary. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to make the contribution that I should have liked to make in the debate on a common foreign and security policy. Again, I found the Foreign Secretary, quite rightly, trying to soothe us into believing that the words were little more than the words used before, and that the treaty went little further than the Single European Act did. The language is very different. We are apparently supposed to ignore the difference between "we should endeavour to agree and

[Mr. Rowlands]

co-operate" and "thou shalt define a foreign policy". We are told that the change in language does not mean anything, or that, if it does, the change is minimal. We live by language; it is our profession. We spend a lot of time with language. There are differences between the forms of words and that is why we should be sceptical.

One of the running themes among Conservative Members has been that they were conned in 1986 on the Single European Act. I confess I was, too. I played little or no part in the proceedings on the Single European Act. I did not think that it was a bridgehead. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who wishes to embarrass the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), leaps up every five minutes and says, "Ah, but you signed the Single European Act, and in doing so, you signed this, and this and this." That may be the lesson that we have learnt since the debates of 1985 and 1986, and that is the lesson that we are determined not to forget when we go through the treaty line by line. We must study the words, the provisions and the agenda for the 1996 conference.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): We are constantly construing Acts of Parliament and treaties. There is a body, to which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) recently referred, that will interpret all the words. It is a question of judgment. The Court of Justice will apply to articles L to S. If it applies to those articles, it applies to article N. If a contentious matter comes up which the Court of Justice wants to challenge, whose judgment does it accept? It does not accept the Minister's judgment, but the European judgment.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman, as always, makes a pertinent point. The Foreign Secretary argued, as the Minister did on an intervention, that there was a veto over the common foreign policy. He said that because decisions had to be unanimous, there was a veto. The Minister leapt to his feet during the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) who said that the terms of article J.4 were that the "Union requests" the Western European Union. The word "request" means nothing more and is very gentle. It does not mean any further obligation. Article B, however, states:

"The Union shall set itself . . . objectives"——

to have a common defence policy. We could even accept such ambiguity of language, although I do not think that we should, if—to return to the observation that strikes me every time I read another paragraph of the treaty—it were not for the grubby watermark of compromise, and the way in which contradictory and rather deadly pieces were left in the treaty.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

2.30 am

Mr. Rowlands: May I finish this point first, to keep the flow of the argument going? I am trying to produce a rational argument.

Article J.4 contains the words, "The Union requests", but article B states "shall set . . . objectives"—two contradictory pieces of language. To add to the problem of deciding where the balance was struck, a mere declaration is included in the treaty on

"voting in the field of the common foreign and security policy".

That provision was not seriously dwelt upon—

The Chairman: Order. It was dwelt on during debate on the last but one group of amendments, and it is not particularly relevant to title VII. If it is, the hon. Gentleman is taking an awful long time to get to it.

Mr. Rowlands: I shall get to it promptly. As the Minister admitted, the central five points on the agenda of the next conference in 1996, which is mentioned in article N.2 of title VII, will include common foreign and security policy. I was about to observe, Mr. Morris, that the bridgeheads for the development of that common foreign and security policy have been established in the way that Ministers have tried to present the case to us and in the language of the "Declaration on voting in the field of the common foreign and security policy", which says that the Maastricht

"Conference agrees that, with regard to Council decisions requiring unanimity, Member States will, to the extent possible, avoid preventing a unanimous decision where a qualified majority exists in favour of that decision."

That is a mere declaration, but what a bridgehead to have established before further revision in 1996.

The Secretary of State said that there was no Luxembourg compromise around, but the declaration smacks of the language of that compromise. Although it says that we have a right to a veto, it also says that there will be ways to force us to abandon it, and, if there is a qualified majority, we will have to go along with it. That is the language of the Luxembourg compromise, and it has been written into issues of common foreign and security policy.

Article N.2 tells us that the new conference will have at its centre the question whither the common foreign and security policy goes. That declaration will not resile from the provision in article after article to establish the principle of a fully fledged common security and defence policy of the kind that many of us believe is the worrying feature which is being trailered and flagged in the treaty, ready for the conference.

Mr. Corbyn: I am reluctant to interrupt my hon. Friend's flow, which is considerable, and his analysis of the issues, but he mentioned article C, the "acquis communautaire", and how it fits in with the common defence policy. An important answer on the Danish compromise was given to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) earlier. In reality, the Danish people are being asked to vote in a second referendum on a press release put out after the Edinburgh summit. There is no fundamental change in the terms of the treaty.

What will the acquis communautaire about the common defence policy be in 1996? Is there to be a common defence policy? Is there to be a common defence policy minus Denmark on the basis of a press release, while the treaty is exactly the same? How on earth will such matters be resolved? Should not the Danish people be told that they are being conned?

Mr. Rowlands: From what I read, I understand that the Danish people are clearly observing the issues. One of the joys of having a referendum is that everybody, including politicians, has to concentrate and explain the terms of the treaty in language that members of the public can

understand, and thereby appreciate the issues. As a passionate supporter of the referendum, I believe that that exercise would also do us a power of good.

Sir Russell Johnston: I agree, basically, with the hon. Gentleman's logic, and I know that the Welsh are attracted to occasional flourishes of oratory, but I did not greatly care for the expression, "the grubby watermark of compromise". I think that compromise is quite a good thing, and a necessary exercise in politics. We will never make any progress in Europe or the House unless there is a willingness to compromise.

Mr. Rowlands: Of course, we spend our lives compromising—in our personal and political lives, as well as every other part of our lives. But I think that we are now discussing a grubby compromise because it has been created in an unstable treaty. That is my fundamental worry.

I remember vividly that one of the earliest pieces of evidence that we received in the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs came from one of the constitutional experts, Mr. Vibert. I was struck forcibly when he said that the treaty was basically unstable. Our debates in Committee have exposed the nature of that instability——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now in full flow, and must return to the amendment.

Mr. Rowlands: I am sorry, Mr. Morris. I was provoked by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and I shall resist that provocation.

I support new clause 30, which states:

"The Secretary of State shall, whenever proposals are made, or are to be made . . . under Article B in Title I . . . for revision of the policies and forms of co-operation introduced by the Treaty—

(a) lay before Parliament a report setting out the nature of the proposals and their potential effect on the interests".

Due to the treaty's instability and its potential negative consequences on the communities that I represent, I support new clause 30. I am worried: we cannot even get a lowest-common-denominator type agreement in Committee about what simple language means, so heaven help us when the policies in article B start to be implemented. What will happen when we start moving closer towards economic and monetary union and begin to frame a common defence policy? If, as I fear, the words contain a clear drift towards a Europe of a sort that I do not believe in, that policy should be subject to continuous scrutiny as proposed in new clause 30.

Mr. Cash: New clause 30 stands in my name, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Due to the carte blanche provided by so much of the treaty, it is essential that, when the nitty-gritty is being worked out within, for example, the citizenship provisions—and

"the rights and duties to be imposed thereby"—

we should know what they are. The new clause would provide the opportunity for us to obtain a definition and receive Parliament's opinion. If we did not have that opportunity, we would be handing the whole lot over to an authoritarian Government.

Mr. Rowlands: We ought to have a running commentary, as suggested in new clause 30, to ensure that we know the effect of any changes in the citizens provisions. But I am worried about another central aspect —the drive towards monetary union by monetarist means, which is written into article B and all the articles that follow it. At least, if we passed new clause 30, the Government would have to present the House with proposals stage by stage, on a regular, methodical basis, to find out where we stood and how far we had got.

The people I represent and my predecessors represented know the effects of monetarism on communities such as mine. Unemployment is rocketing in my area, even as a result of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. Let us consider the consequences of returning to a fixed gold standard of the kind that we suffered in the 1920s and early 1930s: that led to male unemployment of 69 per cent. in my constituency in the 1930s.

Fortunately, the Chamberlains of this world were driven off the gold standard—driven out of the ERM of the 1930s and away from the nonsense of monetarism, although they believed in it. The consequences of moving towards such a process, however, led to devastation—to the destruction of jobs, and to suffering and hardship in my community.

My predecessors stood where I am standing, and argued passionately against such policies and processes. I have not come here 30 or 40 years later to endorse the proposal that others should act for us without our even knowing the effect. That is why I cannot support aspects of the treaty, and why I support the amendment. I want to ensure that, however difficult it is, we are able to hold on by our fingertips to some control over the processes that affect the lives, jobs and prospects of the people whom we represent.

Mr. Bill Walker: I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate. First, let me say to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that his credentials, and his support for federalism, have never been in doubt. It will give him no satisfaction to hear it, but I agree heartily with his definition of federalism, and with his definition of what the people of Scotland believe it to be. Whatever Ministers think, the hon. Gentleman has reflected the views of everyone I know in Scotland, and their interpretation of the word "federal"—and that includes members of the Government.

Last Friday, I attended my constituency annual general meeting. Before and after the meeting, people came up to me and said, "Bill, why are you so worried? We have been assured by almost everyone we have talked to that the treaty is unworkable." I replied, "Well, for the first time in my life it has been suggested to me that I should support something that is unworkable." That strikes me as an illogical position.

One reason for the amendments—particularly the new clause—is our belief that the matters concerned should be properly debated, so that the people of this country can at least be certain that our Parliament is examining all aspects of the treaty to find out whether it is unworkable, as I believe it is.

Mr. George Robertson: The hon. Gentleman says that he explained to his constituency association—no doubt in Blairgowrie—that he was being asked to vote for something that was unworkable and that he does not believe in voting for something that is unworkable. However, he went through the Division Lobby to impose the poll tax, first on Scotland and then on England and Wales. He knew then that that was unworkable, and he

[Mr. George Robertson]

certainly knows now that it was unworkable. Why has he suddenly come to the conclusion that he should not vote for something that is unworkable?

2.45 am

Mr. Walker: You will recollect, Mr. Morris, that a long time ago I obtained Mr. Speaker's ruling on whether or not there was such a thing as the poll tax. Mr. Speaker ruled quite clearly that there was not—that that was something quite different. What I voted for was never a poll tax. I would happily have voted for a poll tax so that individuals who did not pay did not have a vote. I have never in my life knowingly supported something that I believed to be unworkable. I believe that even the best things can be made unworkable by people injecting into them systems, procedures and checks which make them unworkable.

I made a living by sorting out companies which had problems. One of the things that life teaches us is that if we put into structures which are unworkable checks and balances which are contradictory and will not actually provide checks and balances, we should not be surprised if we end up with a shambles and chaos.

Mr. Cash: Has my hon. Friend considered the following proposition: if 12 member states agreed unanimously to ratify the treaty and then, within the context of the European Court of Justice as a whole and within the framework of a legal treaty, thereby ensured that the mechanism was put in place for, as one of the articles says, an unlimited period, and if six or even fewer of those member states were committed to it, primarily because they believed that they would get subsidies, cohesion funds and the rest out of it, if the treaty is proved to be unworkable, as we are told that it will be, how will those six member states be encouraged to unravel that unworkable treaty when it has been proved to be unworkable just as the exchange rate mechanism was proved to be unworkable? Unanimous agreement to unravel it will never be obtained. An unstable structure will be created, which is known to be unworkable, which we shall never be able to get out of, and which is bound to collapse—just as the ERM is collapsing, and economic and monetary union with it. That will have a catastrophic effect on the rest of an unstable Europe—Kosovo, Macedonia, eastern Europe, and so on. Does my hon. Friend not agree that the Minister of State is creating that very disaster?

The Chairman: Order. That sounded to me like a Third Reading speech by the hon. Member for Stafford.

Mr. Walker *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I know that it is late, but the hon. Gentleman should sit down until I have sat down. I hope that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) will not go down that particular route and that he will now address the amendment.

Mr. Walker: I trust, Mr. Morris, that at no point have I failed to address the amendment.

The Chairman: Order. I thought that the hon. Gentleman might be tempted down another route. Perhaps he will now address the amendment.

Mr. Walker: New clause 30 is an important new clause. It does not alter the treaty. If, therefore, it is agreed to by the Committee, it will have no effect on a treaty that the Government wish to be ratified. Clause 2 requires a further Act of Parliament before the United Kingdom can move to the third stage of economic and monetary union. The new clause requires Parliament's agreement to any alterations to the Maastricht treaty, brought about by articles B and N of the treaty.

Furthermore, since we are already agreed that we shall now have a Report stage on the Bill, the acceptance of new clause 30 would not add to the consideration of the Bill, so it should not worry hon. Members. It is difficult to see, therefore, what possible objection Front-Bench Members can have to new clause 30, since it provides that this Parliament would have to approve any proposed alterations to the Maastricht provisions before they got set in stone—*[Interruption.]* Good heavens—I have had a remarkable effect on Front-Bench Members on both sides; they are now collaborating. Is this perhaps an indication, Mr. Morris, that they are discussing whether they can arrive at an understanding on this?

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister claims that he wishes to preserve the sovereignty of our Parliament. He also claims that he wants subsidiarity. I suggest that this new clause is a very modest test of the Government's good intentions. On the first page of the treaty we are told that it will probably have to be revised, so we understand that this is accepted. We must, it says,

"maintain in full the 'acquis communautaire'",

and to do that it will probably be necessary to revise both the policies and the procedures contained within the treaty.

Having spent some time examining what this version of the Maastricht treaty has to say, I suggest that we owe it to the country and to ourselves—and, more importantly, to each of our constituents—to examine just as thoroughly any amendments subsequently proposed to the treaty. Hence I believe that the Committee will see, and the House will eventually see, that it would be wise to accept this new clause.

I wonder also, when we are looking at what would happen if the Committee accepted the amendment put forward by the Liberals linked to this new clause—*[Interruption.]* It is often the case, Mr. Morris, that those who vote for us to stay up late abscond early and go to bed.

Mr. Winnick: Although the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who moved the amendment, is not in his place for perfectly understandable reasons—he may be having a cup of tea—it is interesting to consider where all the others who were responsible for the Government's majority of five are. Why have they not stayed? Does it not show contempt for the Committee that, having voted to go on after 10 o'clock because the Government could not otherwise have got a majority, none of them is here now.

Mr. Walker: One of the interesting things about parliamentary life is how others will vote for you to do the work, Mr. Morris. You may well have noticed that fact as you have to sit there as a result of a decision that was taken not by you, but by others. That seems to be the pattern for those who talk about compromise. The only compromise I have seen tonight has been the way in which the hon.

Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber was compromised by some of the things that were said to him throughout the debate.

I have some questions to put to my right hon. Friend with regard to new clause 14. Does he consider that any amendment to the protocols is covered by the procedures in article N of title VII? Does he consider that any new protocols would be covered by article N? Does he agree that any amendments to any protocols will have to be ratified by the United Kingdom before being effective throughout Europe? Does he agree that the House should have the opportunity to debate and approve any changes to any protocol?

Protocols affecting Denmark, for example, were agreed at Edinburgh last December, in the hope that those changes to the treaty would persuade enough Danish people to change their minds and vote yes in their second referendum. If those changes to the Maastricht treaty as it affects Denmark were new protocols, amendments to existing protocols or amendments to the treaty itself, they require the approval by separate ratification of each of the 12 member states.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Can my hon. Friend tell the Committee to which particular new protocols placed on the treaty as a result of the Edinburgh Council he objects?

Mr. Walker: If my right hon. Friend were not so impetuous, he would probably have waited to hear the rest of my question.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Walker: My right hon. Friend asked me a question and I am about to answer it. My right hon. Friend was being too impetuous.

If those changes were not amendments to protocols or to the body of the treaty and therefore did not need separate ratification, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Maastricht treaty being put to the Danish people in their second referendum is exactly the same treaty as was put to them in the first one?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Before I answer that question, perhaps my hon. Friend misread his speech——

Mr. Walker: I have not misread anything.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to be certain that I heard my hon. Friend correctly. Perhaps other hon. Members will dissent, but I thought that I heard him talk about new protocols which had been added to the treaty at Edinburgh. Will he tell me——

Mr. Walker: I said "if" right at the beginning.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps my hon. Friend will be kind enough to read that passage again. Other hon. Members seem to agree with me that he referred to new protocols which had been added to the treaty. Perhaps he can tell the Committee which protocols they are.

Mr. Walker: It is unfortunate that we have such an impetuous young man on the Front Bench. To me, at any rate, he is a young man. If those changes to the Maastricht treaty as it affects Denmark were new protocols—that was what I said——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have not seen anyone in the Committee dissent from the proposition that a few minutes ago my hon. Friend read out a passage from his speech which referred to new protocols in the treaty as a result of the Edinburgh Council. To which particular protocols is he referring? It is difficult for me to answer his question when I am not aware of which protocols he is talking about.

Mr. Walker: I had wee laddies like that serving under me in the Air Force.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Walker: I shall give way in a moment. The question that I wanted to put——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Chocks away, Biggles.

Mr. Walker: Biggles was a fictional character; I was real.

Either those changes to the Maastricht treaty as they affect Denmark were new protocols or they were not. Either the treaty is unamended and therefore no extra ratification is needed, or it has been changed to suit Denmark—in which case, separate ratification of such changes is needed. If my right hon. Friend the Minister had not been quite so impetuous, he would have given me the opportunity to put what I think was a reasonable question. It has been my experience in life that individuals who are unhappy, insecure or doubtful about their position tend to jump in very quickly.

3 am

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I jumped in very quickly, but not because I am unsure of my position. I was in Denmark last week and the people of Denmark are labouring under the impression that protocols were negotiated on their behalf at Edinburgh which changed the basis of the treaty to which they said no in their earlier referendum. Is that not the most important point that we can make today, when we are talking about Denmark, because they seem to believe that they have been told——

The Chairman: Order. We are not supposed to be talking about Denmark under these protocols, I think. We drifted into that and I accept that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was tempted down that route.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: We are talking about the protocols.

The Chairman: We are not talking about what the Danish people feel about protocols under this amendment.

Mr. Walker: The question I was trying to get through to my right hon. Friend the Minister was whether, through the mechanism of this new clause 14, or otherwise, my right hon. Friend can say that any amendment to any protocols or any new protocols will require the approval of the House of Commons before they take effect. And if not, why not?

Mr. Cash: Has my hon. Friend noticed that the German Bundestag has given itself an agreement for a two-thirds majority in the Bundestag on whether or not it proceeds to economic and monetary union? Can my hon. Friend tell me under what protocol this has been agreed? All the other member states have had to agree to opt-outs of various kinds. How does it come about that the Germans have given this to themselves? It is a bit like Napoleon crowning himself to make himself Emperor of France.

Mr. Walker: I cannot give my hon. Friend the answer that he is asking for, because unlike him I was not aware that the Germans could, would or had done anything that they could do unilaterally. I am not aware that any of our Parliaments or any of the nation state Parliaments can do that. My understanding is that if we are going to do it under the treaty of Rome it has to be agreed, and that all have to be in agreement with it. That is why——

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): Does the interpretation of the answer that my hon. Friend has just given mean that the German Bundestag has, in effect, not ratified the treaty?

Mr. Walker: The Germans, as I understand the situation, Mr. Morris——

The Chairman: Order. We are dealing with article 7. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was being fairly tight in his speech, but he is allowing himself to be tempted down a number of different avenues. I hope that he will now get back to the amendment.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris, this is a treaty on European union. I would simply submit to you, Mr. Morris, that to consider the relationship between the different member states in relation to those protocols is reasonable as this is about a treaty on European union. It is not just about this House. That, after all, is what the Government are trying to do.

The Chairman: We are on title VII, "Final Provisions".

Mr. Cash: I know.

The Chairman: Order. If the hon. Member knows that, he should not have made the earlier submission, with a sort of laugh on his face. It is not really very funny at all.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May I draw the Committee's attention to title VII, article O, in the second paragraph, which deals entirely with agreements being submitted for ratification by all the contracting states. If hon. Members refer to those articles on ratification, they will see that the second paragraph says:

"This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the Contracting States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

I would think that that would mean we could make references to the Danish referendum or to the various processes of ratification.

The Chairman: What the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) did in his speech was to link those things in—and very skilfully—but I am afraid that there has been less skill on the other side so far.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Would my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, (Mr. Taylor) agree that there is no need to mention this any more? Instead of criticising the Minister of State, he should thank him very much indeed for confirming that no new protocols were agreed in Edinburgh, and that to that extent the people of Denmark have been cheated—and cheated shamefully—if anyone gives them the impression that they are getting the same exemptions as Britain got.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that useful intervention. The people, politicians and members of the media in Denmark are taking careful note of our debates. The Minister's impetuous response may return to haunt him. It will certainly be quoted, if not by the friends of the treaty, by those who, like many of my hon. Friends and me, wish to have the issues examined.

Mr. Beggs: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is possible for Governments to make agreements to convenience each other, as with the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Two were signed—one to suit the Irish Republic and one to appease the British public.

Mr. Walker: I accept that Governments can, and often do, present their side of an agreement to their electorates and dress it up in the way they would like them to understand what has been agreed. There is nothing new about that. I will not drift into discussing the Anglo-Irish Accord. I have expressed my view on that over the years. With the passage of time, the Maastricht treaty will enjoy the same degree of respect as the Anglo-Irish Accord enjoys because, like that accord, it has been oversold. I fear that the benefits of Maastricht will in many respects turn out to be the opposite of what has been stated.

I come to amendment No. 96. Hon. Members may wonder why I have dealt with this group in reverse order. By beginning with the new clause, I thought that the Minister might jump in with a quick response. Considering my right hon. Friend's attitude when in the Whips Office or as a Minister dealing with the Maastricht measure, he has not disappointed me in that he reacted in the way I expected. I got out of him precisely what I wanted. That is why I dealt with the amendments in the group in reverse order. In other words, I tempted my right hon. Friend into intervening. He was endeavouring to show that he was brighter and more intelligent than I, which is the way I thought he would react.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The Minister made a vital statement. I am wondering whether there is any means by which the Committee could convey a message to the Danish Parliament making clear what the Minister said. His statement made it abundantly clear that the people of Denmark are being conned.

Mr. Walker: I have been to Denmark many times. In my previous incarnation, I used to trade extensively in Denmark and in other parts of Europe. When dealing with the Danish people, I always found that in factual matters such as article——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot give the history of his relationship with the Danish people. He can speak to amendment No. 96, which I accept that he was trying to do before he was interrupted by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

Mr. Walker: Before you interrupted me, Mr. Morris, I was about to say "article L". Will my right hon. Friend explain to me and to the Danish people what will happen?

Does article L mean that the Court of Justice can override any interpretation of the Maastricht treaty made by the Council, the European Parliament, the Commission or any member state? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, no matter what interpretation he or his colleagues may place on any section of the treaty—such as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's interpretation of subsidiarity—article L means that the Court of Justice has the last word? Is it the court's interpretation of subsidiarity which will be law?

Scotland has a special interest in subsidiarity. I shall not get involved in a debate about it now because I have spoken about it at some length. I hope that at some point I shall find a suitable amendment to allow the people of Scotland to have their say about how their treaty of Union is being amended, which is very important in terms of subsidiarity.

If the United Kingdom were to ratify the Maastricht treaty, would the provisions for the Court of Justice in article L apply immediately to the United Kingdom? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that? Does he agree that in any judicial review or dispute relating to Community matters a judgment by the Court of Justice would override one by the High Court or even the House of Lords? Does he also agree that a House of Lords ruling on the minimum wage, maximum working hours, equal opportunities or working conditions—all matters which are in the body of the Maastricht treaty, never mind the social charter—would ultimately be determined by the Court of Justice and not the House of Lords?

Had my right hon. Friend the Minister not been so impetuous, we might have had the opportunity to speak. I and others who are carrying out our proper duties in relation to our constituents by raising fundamental issues which may lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom believe that it is right that we should have answers to our questions. One of the most disturbing aspects of our debates has been that Ministers have been intervening before people such as I have had the opportunity to make a contribution and ask our questions. It has meant that our questions have largely been unanswered.

Why do I raise that point now? At the beginning, I mentioned that I had my annual general meeting last Friday. It is no secret that some of us who have taken a stand on Maastricht have been put under pressure from forces not within our own constituencies. I took a copy of *Hansard* containing my contribution to the debate on subsidiarity to my constituents and supporters who turned up for the meeting. I told them to read it carefully and tell me where my questions were answered. The absence of answers has formed a pattern throughout the debates. We are told, "Don't worry, chaps. The way we have this Maastricht treaty set up, you will have opportunities to ask questions and to influence." Is that the way the House of Commons is to be treated in the future? After all, we have not yet ratified the treaty properly. Sadly, my Government are not giving me an opportunity to put questions on behalf of my constituents and to receive satisfactory answers. What we shall have when this Bill has completed its passage is exactly what it was understood at the beginning to be. We have not had an opportunity to question adequately or properly.

3.15 am

In making that comment, I intend no reflection on the Chair. I was being entirely honest when I said at an earlier stage that I was astonished at how well you, Mr. Morris, had handled these entire proceedings. It is difficult enough to listen for long hours to debates, hoping that one will have an opportunity to participate and ask questions. It must be even more difficult to sit in the Chair and ensure that individuals like me stay in order. In that respect, Sir, you have done a remarkable job, as I am sure all hon. Members agree.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman has talked about pressure. Does he agree that it amounts to contempt of the House of Commons if a party organisation puts undue pressure of an hon. Member who is expressing his views? Surely it is contemptuous of Parliament to intimidate an hon. Member for the purpose of preventing him from expressing his opinions.

Mr. Walker: I do not think that you will want me to enter into that debate, Mr. Morris. I shall say only that, throughout my life, I have been able to deal with such difficulties. If one believes in what one is doing, it is never difficult to explain why one is doing it. Problems arise if one does not believe in what one is doing. That probably applies to many hon. Members in respect of this treaty. They find it extremely difficult to justify the stand that they are taking. They make the point that, as the treaty is unworkable, people should not worry about it. If it is unworkable, we should not endorse it. The new clause would go a long way towards putting some kind of order into the disorder of this ghastly treaty.

Mr. George Robertson: It is always a great delight to follow the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), as following him means that his speech is finished. He is a gentleman with a considerable sense of humour, which he has been deploying well for the last 45 minutes.

The real question that we ought to be asking ourselves at this absurd time of the night is why we should be discussing this matter in a debate on a Liberal amendment. I realise that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) moved the amendment with tongue in cheek. If he wanted to make a debating point —and what better time than the middle of the night to make a debating point?—he could have said that, over the many dreary hours of this ratification procedure, he had moved amendments that he did not intend to support and, indeed, was determined not to support. The obscure aspect of the reasoning on this occasion is that the hon. Gentleman represents a party which says not just that it is in favour of the treaty but that it is enthusiastically for the treaty. Indeed, we are here at 19 minutes past 3 o'clock in the morning because the Liberal party was so enthusiastic about it that it wanted to debate the matter in the middle of the night.

It would be a cheap debating point to say that only the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber has stayed to listen to the debate that his party inflicted upon the rest of us at this time of the night. He represents a significant proportion of his party, both in the quantitative and qualitative senses. Despite the provocation, I refuse to fall out with him, because we have been friends over many years. He is testing that friendship to destruction, but I still refuse to fall out with him.

If the Liberal party was so enthusiastic to debate this in the middle of the night, why are Liberal Members not here to support the hon. Gentleman? He deserves their support; indeed, he requires it. I know that they were all waiting to hear what arguments he would deploy for folding title VII into the Bill.

Sir Russell Johnston: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, there were a number here when I was speaking. It is stretching enthusiasm to an extreme to have it defined simply in terms of hon. Members being willing to come to listen to other hon. Members speak.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman says that a number were here to hear him. I think that the number was one for part of the time.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): And he only came in to see what time he could get a closure.

Mr. Robertson: No doubt he came in to find out what Bill his party had facilitated for the Government. However, I do not wish to be frivolous, because that would diminish the importance of the debate.

There is still a genuine mystery about why the Liberal party would want to fold title VII into the Bill. It does not make sense for the Liberal party to want to do that. It makes no sense for us to do it. Even if one were a federalist and in favour of a unitary state, it would not make sense to follow the line of reasoning behind the amendment. I do not know whether the Liberal party intends to push the amendment at the end of the debate. I do not feel inclined to recommend to my hon. Friends that we should vote for it or abstain; we should vote against it, as we did on the Liberal amendment on title I, because it makes no sense.

Sir Russell Johnston: May I be allowed to point out that at the beginning of my speech I said that we would not be voting on the amendment? Clearly the hon. Gentleman was not here or he was sound asleep.

Mr. Robertson: Anybody who has followed the debate would excuse me for the latter. The record of televison will show that I was here and have been here more consistently than the other 19 members of the Liberal party who voted many hours ago to keep us here into the night.

Mr. Rowlands: I strongly agree with most of what my hon. Friend has said about title VII. There is one temptation to vote for it: article R, paragraph 2, would make it clear that, if the Danes do not carry the referendum the treaty will be null and void and will not be ratified by us or anybody else. So there might be a case for putting article R, paragraph 2, into the legislation.

Mr. Robertson: The problem is that we cannot pick and choose; we have to have the whole title or none of it. In any event, what happens in Denmark is a matter for the Danish people, and it should be left to them. It is not for us to interfere in their decision. The vast majority of the Danish parties will recommend a "yes" vote in the referendum on 18 May. The treaty will stand notwithstanding anything done in this debate.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The Danes are labouring under a misapprehension, which is being given to them, that if they do not ratify they will be thrown out of the Common Market and nobody will stand by them. It is incumbent on us to make clear the undertaking given by the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister that, if the Danes do not carry the referendum, that is the end of the Maastricht treaty. We must make it plain that we will back them on that. That undertaking is essentially contained in title VII.

Mr. Robertson: The Danish people are intelligent enough to make up their own minds on the basis of the information that they already have. They are able to weigh all the arguments by the numerous people from this country who have gone to Denmark and those by their own political organs. I have no doubt that, at the end of that process, they will take a wise decision. Of course, on 18 May the Danish people will vote on the whole of the Maastricht treaty, unlike people in this Parliament, who are dealing with the treaty minus the valuable social chapter. The treaty on offer to the Danes is radically different from and much more complete and balanced than the treaty that the Government have offered us. Amendments that have still to be debated may allow us to change that.

Mr. William Ross: The hon. Gentleman lauds the intelligence of the Danish people. They decided on Maastricht last year. Why on earth is the rest of Europe almost saying, "If at first we don't succeed, let's try, try the Danes again"? How many times will they have to vote? As the Danes have to have a second vote because the majority against the treaty was narrow, why can there not be a second vote in France?

Mr. Robertson: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is that the Danish Parliament has decided that the people should vote again following the discussions at the Edinburgh summit. The vast majority of Danish parliamentarians, who have as much right to make decisions as parliamentarians here, decided that Denmark should look again at the original result in the light of the improvements that the Danish Government obtained in Edinburgh. There may be cause for debate about the outcome of the Edinburgh summit, but the Danish Parliament, the Folketing, decided to ask the Danish people to vote again in the light of those changes. That is their custom, but it is not the custom of this Parliament. The Danes have decided that that is the best way to proceed, but this country uses Parliament for ratifications. That is the right way for us to proceed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The hon. Gentleman heaps praise on the intelligence of the Danish people. Does that explain why the "Yes" vote seems to be crumbling, crashing, to well below 50 per cent.? Is that not part of the answer to the apprehensions that have been expressed about the Danish people?

The Chairman: Order. Danish opinion polls do not come under the amendments that are before the Committee.

Mr. Robertson: I appreciate that ruling, Mr. Morris. What counts, as we all say as politicians, is the vote on 18 May. That is the ultimate judgment.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall not give way, because I intend to be brief so that other hon. Members may participate in this important debate.

I return to my argument on title I: that an important principle unites not just the Front-Bench spokesmen, who have been accused throughout the ratification process of being in cahoots, but my hon. Friends, who normally do not agree with me about the outcome of the process. That principle is that we should not over-legislate on Europe. In relation to Europe there should be minimum United Kingdom legislation.

Mr. Corbyn: Before my hon. Friend leaves entirely the whole subject of the future of the European Community, would he care to put on the record exactly what improvements the Danish Parliament has negotiated for its people for the referendum?

The Chairman: Order. That is not relevant.

Mr. Robertson: Not this evening, no. It will be decided on 18 May in Denmark, and that has nothing to do with the House of Commons.

Mr. Rowlands: Will my hon. Friend give way? I do apologise to him.

Mr. Robertson: I give way only and finally on the ground that Mr. Keir Hardie, former parliamentarian, was once an inhabitant of my constituency but went to my hon. Friend's constituency to represent it. Simply in the light of that sentimental fact, I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, whatever the reason. He told the Committee that the Danes were voting for the treaty plus the social chapter. But they are also now voting for the treaty minus monetary union, because what they did in December was to give formal notification that they would not go to the third stage of economic and monetary union. It is important to realise that, while accepting the social chapter, the Danes have rejected monetary union.

Mr. Robertson: The Danes have indeed said that they will not proceed to the third stage of monetary union, and that is something on which they will be voting. It will be their decision. I would say to my hon. Friend, in relation to our distinguished predecessor, Keir Hardie, that on the eve of the first world war he called for a united states of Europe. Clearly that is not a tradition that has drifted down the Welsh valleys over the years.

Mr. Rowlands: Not along the Maastricht lines.

Mr. Robertson: Whether on Maastricht lines or not, I am not in favour of a united states of Europe, although I could see its attraction in a year like 1914.

I go back to the main point of my speech, which is that we should not over-legislate. There are dangers here. European legislation has a particular, specific and privileged status in British law. It is that, where we legislate, we give precedence to European law, automatic precedence over domestic, United Kingdom law. We should therefore be wary of legislating where we need not legislate. This title in this part of the treaty is something that need not be part of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and need not be part of those United Kingdom laws affected by the Maastricht treaty or by any of the other treaties, and therefore we should reject the amendment.

The principle of minimum legislation in the European area is something that should appeal both to those who are enthusiastic about Europe and those who are, to put it mildly, sceptical about the great European experience. That is what this debate is really about, however far it has ranged this evening. That is why I believe that this is an amendment that should not be supported.

Mr. Greg Knight (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 197, Noes 27.

Division No. 222 **[3.34 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard

Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Irvine Patnick
Mr. Timothy Wood

NOES

Bennett, Andrew F.
Body, Sir Richard
Cash, William
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lewis, Terry
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. David Winnick.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 8, Noes 217.

Division No. 223] **3.45 am**

AYES

Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cash, William
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kirkwood, Archy
McMaster, Gordon
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann

Willetts, David
Winnick, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.
Committee report progress.—[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]
Committee to sit again this day.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Election Expenses (Northern Ireland)

That the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 10 March, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 1.

Division No. 224] **[3.55 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Ellerton, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood

NOES

Skinner, Dennis

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Bob Cryer

Tellers for the Noes:

Question accordingly agreed to.

Burma

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

4.5 am

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): On 13 June 1992, troops loyal to the military State Law and Order Restoration Council in the area of Maungdaw came to Mohamed Ilyas Maung Nyo and ordered him, as a Muslim party worker, to go into Bangladesh and fetch Burmese Muslim refugees home. He refused. They arrested him and severely beat him, eventually so severely that he died on about 23 June. His family were then forced to bury him at gunpoint, and the military have returned regularly since to make sure that the body stays where it is. No relatives are allowed to tend the grave. SLORC says that he died of acute gastro-intestinal disease.

Doctor Maung Nu, a constituent of mine, who is Mohamed Ilyas's brother, contacted me and spoke of this tragedy, asking how it could have happened and what Her Majesty's Government could do to stop this sort of thing continuing. It appears that his brother's crime was to be a party worker, believing in democracy under a brutal and despotic regime.

Hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber should picture to themselves the reality. All the things that we take for granted in our daily lives, with our party organisations having party workers putting forward political messages in our constituencies—these basic freedoms are thoroughly abused and clearly can end in death in Burma today.

The case that I have just spoken about is only a microcosm of what is going on in Burma. Of course, the best known example of the Burmese authorities' total abuse of human rights is the continuing house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi. For those hon. Members who do not know, this remarkable woman led her party to an election victory, but the military regime has since refused to accept the result. Despite world condemnation, it has refused to allow her to take up her position as the rightful leader of her Government.

She is married to Dr. Michael Aris, who, as I have to remind hon. Members, is a British citizen. Because she refused to be driven out of her country, she is kept in isolation, away from any contact with the people of Burma. It has got to the point where even Dr. Aris has not received any form of contact from her for some months, and to all intents and purposes her condition is now completely unknown.

What kind of a regime is this that clearly separates families? For any parliamentarians, it should be a matter of great concern when a democratically elected leader of Government is denied access to her electorate. But, on a personal note, I cannot believe that an hon. Member could fail to be moved by the thought of this remarkable woman and her incredible stand against the massed forces of tyranny that constantly rage against her.

I do not believe that enough is known about the facts and figures in Burma today. There are nearly 400,000 refugees from Burma in surrounding countries. There are nearly 1·5 million displaced Burmese in Burma who are unable to return to their homes because of SLORC action. Amnesty International has a list of over 1,500 people in prison on human rights charges. At least three elected Members of Parliament have died in prison. A vast number of people in prison for political offences have died. The list is endless, and I do not intend to detain the House for long. I emphasise that this is a brutal and despotic regime that cares nothing for human rights, and we should do our utmost to bring it to an end.

I am extremely pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on the Front Bench. In asking what the Government can do, I fully accept that they have been in the forefront of those countries attempting to bring pressure to bear on Burma.

I wish to highlight two areas of concern and ask my right hon. Friend some questions. First, is there not more we could do to apply pressure to China? China is the most important supporter of Burma. It has supplied it with some $1·5 billion-worth of arms since 1989 and offers it great protection in the United Nations. Surely it is time that we highlighted China's persistent support for the Burmese regime, particularly as the Chinese are clearly embarrassed by its activities.

Burma is China's Achilles heel in its discussions with Britain over Hong Kong, in so far as the Chinese do not wish to have a spectre of human rights abuse hanging over their heads during the run-in to 1997, particularly if we make great efforts to highlight it across the world.

We should put pressure on all our allies, without exception, constantly to make reference in the United Nations to China's role in this matter, if for no other reason than, to pay for the arms, apart from cutting down vast swathes of timber such as teak and destroying their ecology, the Burmese export heroin to the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. Some 50 per cent. of all heroin imports into the United Kingdom now come from Burma. That has a considerable effect on our young people so, there is a natural reason for doing something about it.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): While my hon. Friend is introducing a debate on human rights, he will have noticed that the Opposition Benches are entirely empty. Is that not a disgrace? The British Government can take practical steps in applying pressure on the Burmese Government to improve its behaviour, but next week my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visits Japan. Japan in one of the leading economic powers in the far east, and it has many trade links with Burma. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary were to apply pressure on the Japanese Government to place levers on the Burmese Government, that might improve human rights in Burma?

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I agree with all that he has said. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister was listening carefully. Japan is certainly one of the countries that could do something to help.

Surrounding countries in Asean could also do a great deal. We all need to bring pressure to bear on many of those countries to be more outspoken about these matters, not simply in their trade with Burma. My hon. Friend mentioned Japan, but there are also others. Britain is providing financial aid to many of those countries, and I am sure that there are ways in which we might seek to tie some strings to that assistance.

A number of western companies exploring for oil and gas are working in Burma. I find that repugnant,

particularly as the regime is so unstable that it can benefit those companies nothing in the long run to try and extract some financial benefit from that country.

I urge the Government to put extra pressure on China, which holds the key to this matter, and to the surrounding countries in Asean and to try to bring these matters to the attention of the United States so that more pressure can be applied to China and other countries.

We must attempt to do whatever we can, and leave no stone unturned, to make sure that Burma returns to democratic government, particularly with its present elected Head of Government.

4.15 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I am delighted to support the Adjournment debate that my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) has been fortunate to obtain. I have been to Burma, and, like him, I have taken a very big interest in its affairs before and since the election there. I can say categorically that the present illegal regime is one of the worst in the world in terms of the interest it takes in its people, the way it treats them and the way it imprisons for 25 years, on trumped-up charges, Members of Parliament elected in 1990.

I agree that we have to act together if we are to influence that country, which is so isolated and has been so isolated and so non-aligned that it left the non-aligned movement. It has now got back into the movement, and is trying in a cosmetic way to replace its existing isolation with a more influential role to improve the situation.

I do not think that anyone who knows the country, or knows what is happening there, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford has graphically described, would recognise that any of the changes that they are trying to bring about are other than cosmetic. It is a matter of tremendous frustration among people who care for that country, and many hon. Members present in the Chamber will recognise that in Rangoon there is a war cemetery with 30,000 Commonwealth soldiers' graves. They fought for that country.

I would ask the Minister to continue to use the powers of the European Community in the way in which we act together. I cannot remember how many times the ambassadors in Rangoon have joined in expressing the full weight of our concern. When we have meetings with the Foreign Ministers of the Community and of the Association of South East Asian Nations, they should continue to apply the pressure for which my hon. Friend has called.

I was in Bangkok recently, and raised the question of Burma with the new Government of Thailand. They put it that their relationship now was not one of friends but of acquaintances. I think the pressures are starting to apply.

I would further request the Minister to see how the new American Administration take up the cudgels. One hopes that they will be every bit as determined as was Mr. Secretary Baker, who, when he went to the ASEAN conference, spoke very firmly about the situation as the Americans see it. There has been tardiness by ASEAN in applying the pressure which one would expect any country to apply to a neighbour who disgraces the standards of human rights about which all are agreed.

The Minister will know that this month there has been an agreed statement in the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva which has been universally condemnatory. It called for the military regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi and to re-establish the democratic Government who were elected in 1990.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing forward something that tends to get forgotten. Burma is a country of 40 million people. It is not a small country, but has tremendous potential in natural resources. It used to be one of the biggest rice exporters in the world but it now imports rice to stay afloat. I think that we should raise this question and use our influence with other countries constantly to remind the SLORC regime that they are part of the international community and are a signatory to many international conventions, but are disgracefully behind in terms of implementing and keeping to the high standards that I am sure all Members in this House want to maintain.

4.19 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I, too, am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) for initiating this debate, and to my other hon. Friends who have contributed to it.

The Government's position on Burma was set out clearly at the session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights which ended in Geneva earlier this month, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) referred. The Minister of State said in his speech to the Commission:

"Burma is another country where repression of human rights has become institutionalised. The military regime steadfastly refuses to accept the result of the 1990 elections, which gave a substantial majority—nearly 60 per cent. of the vote, and over 80 per cent. of the seats—to the party of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of the architect of Burmese independence . . . The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to her reflects international recognition of the desire of the Burmese people for a peaceful transition from a military straitjacket to a democratic system. Meanwhile the army can only stay in power by the familiar methods—secret police, censorship, a ban on virtually all political activity, political imprisonment and torture."

The case raised by my hon. Friend, of the death of Mohamed Ilyas, apparently at the hands of Burmese soldiers, is but one deplorable example of the arbitrary and brutal nature of the regime. It appears determined neither to permit the exercise of democratic rights nor to hand over power to a Government formed by the representatives freely and fairly elected in May 1990. We and our European Community partners have made it clear that the attitude of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council is unacceptable.

The regime continues its efforts to circumvent the clear expression of the will of the Burmese people. Since 9 January this year, a national convention has been taking place in Rangoon to draw up a new constitution. We believe that Burma needs a new constitution which incorporates those changes in the political and economic system which the Burmese people have called for since the demonstrations in 1988.

It must also provide safeguards for the rights of the ethnic minorities, but we believe that this constitution should be devised by the elected representatives, who have the mandate of the people—as, indeed, was laid down by the SLORC in their order 1/90—not by an unelected group who have largely been handpicked by the authorities.

But one of the guidelines, to which the convention has been told it must stick, requires the constitution to

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

enshrine a leading role for the military in Burma's politics. According to the rules of the convention, delegates are forbidden to question this, which makes a mockery of the entire process.

Meanwhile, repression and abuse of human rights continues. Although we welcome the release over the last year of more than 1,500 prisoners, an estimated 1,000 political prisoners are still believed to be held in Burma's jails. Those include a number of elected Members of Parliament, monks, writers and students imprisoned for expressing their political opinions.

Most recently, two students were held by military intelligence in Rangoon for several days in March, during which time they were beaten and accused of distributing anti-Government leaflets. During the visit of the UN special rapporteur in December last year, former political prisoners and others who wished to contact the rapporteur were intimidated and threatened by military intelligence.

The best known of Burma's political prisoners, Nobel peace prize laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, will shortly approach the fourth anniversary of her house arrest in Rangoon. The majority of the Burmese people continue to regard her as the embodiment of their desire for peace, democracy and freedom, and are deeply worried by reports of her frail health. As comments in this House have shown, we in Britain are also deeply concerned about her situation. We have called repeatedly on the SLORC, in concert with our European Community partners and with other like-minded Governments throughout the world, to release her and allow her to remain freely in Burma, in accordance with her wishes.

The 47th session of the UN General Assembly also passed a resolution calling for her unconditional release. Her Majesty's Government will continue to press for her release and the release of all prisoners detained in Burma for political reasons.

There are disquieting reports of other human rights violations in Burma. Those include the forced conscription of porters for use in front-line areas. They also include abuses by the army, and also on occasion by insurgents, of civilian non-combatants in the war zones, including extrajudicial executions and rape. Freedom of expression in Burma remains non-existent, with all media subject to heavy and frequently arbitrary censorship.

Together with our EC partners, we have made our views very clear on many occasions, most recently at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. A resolution condemning human rights abuses in Burma, which we co-sponsored, was passed by consensus on 10 March.

As my hon. Friend said, Burma is one of the largest producers of heroin in the world. The international community is co-operating closely in efforts to stamp out the illicit drugs trade. The authorities in Burma are well aware that the problem of heroin addiction and abuse, often linked with AIDS, affects the people within as well as outside their borders. We welcome the efforts being made by UN agencies and the Burmese authorities to counter illegal drug production by developing infrastructure in the opium-producing regions and introducing substitute crops. We are concerned, however, that a number of leading drug traffickers have been allowed to continue their trafficking activities unpunished. They are even able to invest the profits of their narcotics activities in other businesses in Burma with the acquiescence, and even encouragement, of the authorities.

My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that Burma continues to direct scarce resources into the unjustified purchase of arms and into reinforcing the strength of the armed forces. We deplore this, and at our instigation the European Community decided in July 1991 on an embargo of arms sales to Burma. We have consistently urged other countries to take similar action. The European Community has made formal representations to China—one of Burma's principal arms suppliers, as my hon. Friend pointed out—and we have also raised the issue directly in bilateral talks with the Chinese and will continue to do so. In 1992, EC countries further reduced defence links by the withdrawal and de-accreditation of resident and non-resident defence attachés.

Military repression has been particularly severe against ethnic and religious minorities. Since late 1991, more than a quarter of a million Burmese Muslims, or Rohingyas, have fled Arakan state to Bangladesh to escape abuses received at the hands of the Burmese armed forces. To date, fewer than a tenth of them have returned. The remainder are putting pressure on Bangladesh's own frail economy. We welcome the participation of staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the repatriation process on the Bangladesh side of the border. We hope, too, that agreement can be reached to allow UNHCR to operate on the Burmese side of the border, as well as in Bangladesh.

We are also exerting pressure on the Burmese regime by means of aid policy. In November 1988, the Government, together with other EC Member states, stopped bilateral aid to the SLORC Government in protest at their seizure of power and persistent human rights abuses. This followed the bloody suppression of peaceful demonstrations in Burma. We have also put tight controls on multilateral assistance through the United Nations Development Programme. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe is in touch with my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development about scrutiny of the work of the UN agencies in Burma.

We believe that it is the duty of the international community to maintain pressure on the SLORC to bring about the transfer of power to the civilian Government elected by the people in 1990. The United Kingdom and its EC partners will continue to work together closely to bring about change in Burma. I take my hon. Friend's point about including Japan in the process and encouraging it to use its influence. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will raise the matter when he visits Japan soon. We hope that lobbying by neighbouring Asian countries as well as by western nations will contribute to that pressure.

The continued interest shown by the House reflects the genuine wish of people in Britain to see democracy, freedom and full respect for human rights restored in Burma. We shall continue to make every possible effort to help to bring that about.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 31 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MIDLAND METRO BILL *[Lords]*
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Council Tax and Rents

1. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the average *(a)* council tax levels and *(b)* rent levels in (i) Scotland and (ii) Strathclyde region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The average council tax for a band D property is £559 for Scotland as a whole and £562 for Strathclyde. These figures are both exclusive of council water charges and before discounts. The average weekly local authority rent level for 1992-93 is £24·75 for Scotland and £25·21 for district councils within Strathclyde region.

Mr. Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that council tax and council rent levels have had to be fixed higher in Monklands district council than they need to be because the council has one of the highest employment levels in the United Kingdom? Is he further aware that a Scottish National party councillor has alleged that 40 close relatives of Labour councillors are employed by the council? Does he consider that the revelation by a Labour regional councillor, John Murphy, that all the allegations about nepotism and corrupt employment pratices on the council are true is significant and that the council should be brought to account?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right to point to the relationship between the employment policies pursued by a council and rent and council tax levels. But I have no wish to make any party political points on the matter. Nor is there any need to do so because Labour regional councillor, John Murphy, the Labour member for Coatbridge, North and Glenboig, has said that the council was riddled with cases of nepotism and patronage. We do not need to hear from Tories about the Scottish National party. We only need to hear from someone who has worked for Monklands district council for 17 years and has been suspended—I understand because of the remarks that he made. The only surprise is that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) have maintained complete silence on the issue. But I can see that the hon. Member for Monklands, West is itching to leap to his feet to give us his views on the suspension of Councillor Murphy.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Is the Minister aware that many people in Scotland, but more in Dover, will be interested to know why the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is so interested in Scottish affairs, especially when unemployment in Dover has increased by 137 per cent. since 1990? Is it not about time that the hon. Member for Dover stopped neglecting his constituents and instead concerned himself with unemployment in Dover and how unemployed people will pay the council tax in that local authority?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is a meticulous and extremely hard-working constituency Member. I must remind the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) that this is a United Kingdom Parliament. I understood from the press that the hon. Gentleman was one of the Opposition Members who believe in that proposition. His question showed the continuing embarrassment of the Labour party in Scotland about Monklandsgate.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware of the policy that has been adopted in Strathclyde, under which privately owned houses that were previously council owned have been rated for council tax one band higher than they would have been rated were they still in local authority ownership? Does my hon. Friend agree that every owner of such a house should appeal?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend has raised a point which has already received considerable publicity. It is a matter for the assessor, of course, but my hon. Friend is right to point to the availability of the appeal mechanism. He may be reassured by the fact that no less a luminary of the Scottish left than the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Left?"] Yes, from my perspective. In a statutory instrument Committee yesterday, the hon. Gentleman raised the very point made by my hon. Friend. It was reassuring to discover that Labour Members now have some sympathy for council tenants who have rightly taken advantage of the Government's policy to give them the right to buy.

Mr. Canavan: As the advent of the council tax tomorrow means that today is the last official day of the poll tax, will the Minister now admit that the poll tax was one of the most expensive blunders in the history of any Government? Has not the total cost for administration and collection of the poll tax throughout the United Kingdom now reached the staggering amount of £14 billion?

If local councillors were found guilty of that sort of misspending, they would be surcharged and banned from office for many years. Why not surcharge and ban the Minister and all the other Tory Ministers who collectively were responsible for introducing the poll tax?

Mr. Stewart: As I understand the import of the hon. Gentleman's question, he welcomes the introduction of the council tax and the fact that it will have lower administration and collection costs than the community charge. I reassure him that there will be no amnesty for

non-payers of the community charge. We welcome the hon. Gentleman's apparent underlining of the probable success of the council tax.

Legal Aid

2. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the proposals for legal aid reform.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): We have received a number of representations about the Government's proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for legal aid in Scotland, from the Law Society of Scotland, consumer interests, solicitors' firms, Members of Parliament and members of the public.

Mr. Watson: It would be interesting to know how many of those representations were in favour of the proposals. Why is it that under the proposals, someone in Scotland earning £62 a week who applied for legal aid today would have to pay nothing, but if he applied tomorrow he would have to pay £252 out of his £62 a week? If he were unable to afford that, he would have to abandon his claim. He would not have access to the legal system. What is that, if it is not a denial of basic justice? Will the right hon. Gentleman, even at this 11th hour, recognise that thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands—of Scots will be denied access to legal aid and the legal system? Will he now withdraw those ill-advised proposals?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman substantially exaggerates the position. Only about 2 to 3 per cent. of those qualifying for legal aid this year will be affected by the proposals. When I point out that expenditure is doubling over a six-year period—it has risen from £49 million in 1988 to £100 million this year, with further substantial increases in the pipeline—the hon. Gentleman will realise that any Government have a responsibility to protect the taxpayers' interest and to ensure that the matter is kept under reasonable control.

Mr. McFall: On the Government's own figures, 100,000 people will be taken out of the eligibility category. Among these will be many thousands of women who are locked into violent relationships because they have no access to courts. Such women, with no legal recourse and living in intolerable conditions, could take the law into their own hands. Ironically, some could conceivably end up being granted criminal legal aid to defend themselves against a charge of murder. Does the Secretary of State agree that for the 22,000 women who contacted Women's Aid in Scotland last year, any cuts in legal aid availability will represent a terrible threat to their safety and that of their children?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman has got his figures completely wrong. We will have an opportunity to debate this later on, but the figure is not 100,000 but some 7,500 —less than one tenth of the figure the hon. Gentleman mentioned. Moreover, we expect civil legal aid to continue to increase by up to 40 per cent. by 1995-96. Criminal legal aid is not affected by these changes.

Rail Services (Rural Areas)

3. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met ScotRail to discuss the future of rail services in rural Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. Friend and I meet senior management of British Rail from time to time. Such contacts cover a wide range of topics relating to rail services in Scotland.

Mrs. Michie: Is the Minister aware of the widespread belief in Scotland that the privatisation of British Rail will mean the end of many rural lines? The Secretary of State for Transport has given no guarantee for the future of these services, which will spell disaster for many areas, particularly north of Glasgow and Edinburgh. What did the Minister or his right hon. Friend do to try and prevent Railfreight from hiking up its costs to the oil companies on the West Highland line, forcing them to travel on the roads to Oban, Mallaig and Fort William? What has happened to the Government's commitment to the environment? They are just making the roads more congested and creating more pollution. What happened to their promise to put more freight on to the railways?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have repeatedly given a commitment to provide subsidy and to support services in rural areas which, although loss making, provide invaluable social services. Our franchising proposals are based on a desire to bring the benefits of private sector provision to all passenger services and to make them more responsive. We see the railways being used to a greater extent in future. As to the traffic on the West Highland line, unfortunately it is heavily loss making, failing to make any contribution to the infrastructure and not covering the operational costs. Customers have been unable to agree to British Rail's remedial action, which would have returned the service to viability. We are encouraging more freight to use rail by widening the criteria for section 8 grants, by the proposed new grant scheme for the payment of track charges and by the publication of a consultation paper on lorry weight initiatives.

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister assure the people of Inverclyde that privatisation will not threaten the work of repairing the Newton Street tunnel and Wemyss bay? We are already seeing a deterioration in our services as the railways fatten up for privatisation. Will the Minister assure the people of Inverclyde that they will continue to receive a good service, not one which is run down?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is very important that the hon. Gentleman's constituents continue to receive that service. We recognise the importance of ensuring the necessary investment through Railtrack, which will be responsible for investment in the track and for looking after bridges throughout Scotland. We will support investment in the railways where the schemes do not gain an adequate rate of return but provide a satisfactory cost-benefit return and benefits to the communities concerned.

Scottish Government

5. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he has so far received to his White Paper, "Scotland in the Union—a Partnership for Good".

Mr. Lang: The response to the publication of the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union—A Partnership for Good", has been generally very favourable.

Mr. McAllion: The White Paper offers only procedural tinkering with the Standing Orders of the Westminster Parliament while continuing to lock Scottish business into a voting procedure dominated by Tory votes from the south. Why cannot the Secretary of State see that that is completely unacceptable to the vast majority of the Scottish people, who are demanding their own national Parliament under their own democratic control? If he does not accept what I am saying, why does not he let the Scottish people speak for themselves in a multi-option referendum? If he is not prepared to trust the Scottish people with such a referendum, why on earth should they be prepared to trust him with anything?

Mr. Lang: Once again, the hon. Gentleman, because he is not in a position to exercise power in this place through the will of the electorate, seeks to change the rules or move the goalposts. The fact is that the vast majority of the people of Scotland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, want to maintain the Union and have one United Kingdom Parliament. *The Courier and Advertiser*, the hon. Gentleman's local newspaper, said:

"Scots MPs have the opportunity to become less confrontational. This would be good for Scotland, maybe even for Parliament."

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the best possible news for those of us who seek to preserve and, indeed, to strengthen the Union were the howls of outrage from Opposition Members, who seek to undermine the Union? That is eloquent testimony that my right hon. Friend has it absolutely right. Will he give a commitment that, in its new role, the Scottish Grand Committee will come to Aberdeen to debate matters of great importance to that city and the north-east of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion and I will certainly give it consideration. The Scottish Grand Committee is one Committee which is advanced by the proposals in the White Paper, but the Committee of the Regions is also mentioned. The White Paper says that

"the Government will ensure that Scotland has substantial representation on it."

In that context, I am indebted to the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) for drawing my attention to the SNP's campaign handbook, which described the Committee of the Regions as a

"toothless regional Committee which would lock Scotland out of decision-making in the European Community."

Sir David Steel: The one item of interest in an otherwise colourless White Paper was the proposal to hold Question Time in the Scottish Grand Committee. The Secretary of State has been very coy about how often he expects that to happen. Will he tell us now?

Mr. Lang: I believe that these matters should be discussed through the usual channels and that we should move forward by general agreement across the Floor of the House. I look forward to those discussions in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. Friend will be aware that many people in Scotland feel that strengthening this Parliament and its operations is the best way to reinforce the Union and to secure its future. The White Paper proposes additional meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee and increased opportunities to ask questions, which can only be positive and good. Will he bear it in mind—I hope that the House will do so, too—that it is important that amendments to legislation directly affecting Scotland are fully and properly debated?

Mr. Lang: I will certainly reflect carefully on what my hon. Friend suggests, but I am grateful for his support for the White Paper, which is clearly designed to strengthen the interests of Scotland within the United Kingdom Parliament.

Mrs. Ewing: Is not the Secretary of State very precious about his own position, which is why he sets his face against the democratic wishes of the people of Scotland? He uses his powers as a colonial governor to impose alien policies on the people of Scotland. Is not the real challenge to all Opposition Members of the House to stop sitting on Green Benches and to stand up for Scotland, to support the recall of a Scottish Parliament and to oppose water privatisation? Will they stand in their places for a Scottish Parliament?

Mr. Lang: I am not an appointed governor-general, but, like the hon. Lady, an elected Member of Parliament. As to the rest of her question, perhaps I should offer to write to her.

Mr. Tom Clarke: When the Secretary of State writes to the hon. Lady, will he publish that letter and the rest of the correspondence? When he considers representations on these constitutional matters, will he consider the paper that was presented this morning by the Scottish Foundation for Economic Research at the new Glasgow Caledonian university? It studied achievements in Germany, especially in the socialist region of Nord Rhein-Westphalia, and found that, because of the devolution of power, unemployment is half that in Scotland and growth is 20 per cent. more. If subsidiarity works in Germany and in Europe, why is not it good for Scotland, especially when that is what the Scots want?

Mr. Lang: I am not sure what these facile comparisons between the constitution of the United Kingdom and that of Germany have to do with the question before us, but, if the hon. Gentleman wants comparisons, he can consider the fact that inflation and interest rates have fallen sharply in this country and that we have a competitive exchange rate and are moving out of recession while Germany is still facing considerable problems. The hon. Gentleman may not be so keen on making comparisons in a few months' time.

Victoria Infirmary and Rutherglen Maternity Hospital

6. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about the future of Victoria infirmary and Rutherglen maternity hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Since the Greater Glasgow health board released details of its review of acute and maternity services in November last year, my right hon. Friend has received eight representations, including this question, on the future of the hospitals. I look forward to receiving the health board's recommendations in due course.

Mr. McAvoy: Will the Minister join me in expressing appreciation to all the staff at both hospitals for the service that they give to Glasgow, East Kilbride and my constituency? Will the Minister accept that the uncertainty and insecurity being caused by the review is doing great damage to the morale of all the staff, patients and potential patients attending the hospitals? Will he put an end to that uncertainty by instructing the health board that there is no need to close any hospital in Glasgow?

Mr. Stewart: I can of course agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point and pay tribute to the staff of the hospitals for their valuable contribution. The Victoria unit handles some 31,000 in-patient and some 400,000 out-patient treatments a year, but it is right to have a review of acute and maternity services. That review is aimed at improving services for the people of Glasgow and beyond and would involve substantial sums of extra public expenditure.

Mrs. Fyfe: The Opposition have their vision of the kind of maternity services in particular which should be made available not only to Glasgow but to Scotland as a whole. Will the Minister kindly describe his vision of the maternity services that he wants to see in the coming century?

Mr. Stewart: I wish, as I am sure the hon. Lady does, to see continuing improvements in maternity services. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) said, proposals have been convassed for the transfer to the Royal of maternity services currently provided in Rutherglen. One must put the long-term interests of patients first. We are talking about proposals which might involve substantial extra sums of investment—not cuts —to improve health care in the Greater Glasgow area.

Roads (Fife)

7. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future road programme in Fife.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The new east Fife regional road is proving a great success, and our future plans for Fife will bring further benefits. We announced in February major proposals for the firth of Forth including a second Forth road bridge. We are currently studying a west Fife regional road as part of our longer-term network.

Mr. Campbell: The Minister will know that the A91 trunk road for which his Department has responsibility runs through my constituency and in particular through the town of Cupar. Will he tell my constituents why he is delaying the authorisation of the Bonargate relief road and the Cupar bypass, both of which are necessary not only for safety and convenience but for the protection of the environment?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Traffic management schemes are currently being proposed for Cupar. There are proposals for a bypass not only in Cupar but in Auchtermuchty. The criteria for bypasses include traffic flow and composition, safety considerations, environmental factors, feasibility and the relationship to local and national developments. One of the features of the trunk road network review which we carried out last year was the recommendation that we should concentrate on the strategic routes in the first instance. A number of bypasses cannot therefore go ahead as quickly as some of us would wish.

Mr. Home Robertson: As there is already a dual carriageway across the firth of Forth, does the Minister accept that there should be no need for a second Forth road bridge if the Government would only co-operate with local authorities and ScotRail to provide better commuter services for the communities on both sides of the firth of Forth? Does he accept the case for a passenger transport executive to serve not only the people of Fife but the people of Lothian region in my constituency?

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: We are putting forward a package of proposals for both Fife and the Lothian region. We believe that a second road crossing of the Forth is necessary because the number and length of major delays will escalate year after year out of all proportion to what is considered reasonable or satisfactory.

Mr. Home Robertson: What about a proper train service?

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that one of the key elements for a package is to provide more rail stops not only in Fife——

Mr. Home Robertson: And trains.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree. That is one of the key factors that we shall consider. We are awaiting representations and a feasibility study from the regions concerned, and a package of measures from Lothian region which we shall consider sympathetically as part of the whole. It is not only the A1 which is important for Scotland, but all the infrastructure prospects for the east of Scotland.

Steel Workers (Retraining)

8. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of steel workers made redundant at Ravenscraig and now retraining under official schemes administered by the Lanarkshire Development Agency are retraining for skills in manufacturing.

Mr. Stewart: About 1,000 steel workers made redundant at Ravenscraig are retraining under official schemes administered by the Lanarkshire development ar j 2-9gency. Many are training for a wide variety of skills and qualifications on about 120 courses, including several that could be applied in various contexts, including manufacturing. About 12 per cent. are retraining for skills specific to manufacturing.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister not worried that the proportion of experienced and skilled production workers training for manufacturing in the industrial heartland of Scotland is so appallingly low? Is he not aware that the same mistrust of the prospects for employment is shared by young people in Lanarkshire schools, who see no prospects for manufacturing under the Government? Do the Government intend to do nothing about that?

Mr. Stewart: As I have said, many of the steel workers have chosen courses in management, quality assurance, and so on, which are clearly related to manufacturing although not specific to it. Manufacturing output in Scotland has risen in the past five years and, according to all the surveys, the prospects for exports, output and orders are highly positive. Ultimately, it is for individual former steel workers to choose the courses that they perceive to be in their best individual long-term interests.

Dr. Reid: Is the Minister not worried that only 12 per cent. of people being trained in the industrial heartland of Scotland are being trained for manufacturing industry? Does he not recognise that part of the problem in Lanarkshire, and especially in Motherwell, was that we are entirely dependent on one or two industries, while recovery, not only in Lanarkshire but in Scotland as a whole, depends on training people for a range of manufacturing skills? Is the Minister not disappointed that 88 per cent. of the people being retrained in Scotland's industrial heartland are not being trained for industry or manufacturing?

Mr. Stewart: As I explained to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), that figure is not correct. Many of the skills for which people are training could be used in manufacturing as well as in other sectors of the economy. However, I entirely agree with the more general point made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) that in Lanarkshire, as elsewhere in Scotland, it is essential to have a more diversified economic structure for the future. That, indeed, is the essence of the strategy being pursued by the Lanarkshire development agency with, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the full co-operation of the local authorities and the private sector.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister accept that the problems in Lanarkshire must be seen against the backdrop of a quarter of a million fewer jobs in manufacturing industry than the Government inherited and a quarter of a million Scots languishing on the dole? Does he agree that it is disgraceful that 10,000 young Scots under the age of 18, many of them in Lanarkshire, simply cannot find training places? What, precisely, are the Government prepared to do about the spectre of unemployment and lack of training which is so repugnant to the people of Lanarkshire?

Mr. Stewart: Expenditure on training and related programmes under this Government is two and a half times—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition do not want to hear the figures. It is two and a half times what it was in real terms during the last year of the Labour Government. It is now £2·8 billion—*[Interruption.]* The Opposition do not like to hear the figures, so I will just give them another one. The most recent CBI industrial trends survey for manufacturing firms in Scotland shows that firms themselves intend to increase expenditure on training and retraining in Scotland and in manufacturing industry. I should have thought that even Labour Members would welcome that.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not just jobs in manufacturing but manufacturing output which matters? Will he confirm that manufacturing output in Scotland fell under Labour whereas it has risen dramatically under this Government? In the days of Labour's industrial strategy, was not British Steel one of the world's largest loss makers, whereas now it is one of the most successful steel companies in the world? Labour Members opposed the closure of Ravenscraig and they could have gone into the last election committed to keeping it open, but they did not even have the guts to do that.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on all the points that he has made. He is right, for example, about the increase in manufacturing in Scotland. There is a question from my hon. Friend on that specific subject later on the Order Paper. He is also right to point to the fact that manufacturing productivity in Scotland in the 1980s has increased by 5·2 per cent. per annum on average. That contrasts with 2 per cent. during the 1970s and 4·1 per cent. during the 1960s. The figure is higher than that of any of the major seven OECD economies. Those are very positive facts about the Scottish economy. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman asked a question. He ought to be allowed to listen to the answer. I should like to make a little more progress. Has the Minister completed his answer?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am most obliged.

University Funding

9. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his plans for assuming responsibility for funding the eight Scottish universities formerly funded by the Universities Funding Council.

Mr. Lang: I have established the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council which assumes responsibility on 1 April for payment of grants for teaching and research in Scottish higher education institutions.

Dr. Godman: Although I do not expect the Secretary of State to agree with me, may I nevertheless point out to him that the study of Scottish history and of the Scottish trade union movement is as important academically as those applied subjects that much more readily earn revenue in industry and elsewhere? Where funding is concerned, may I ask him for an assurance that scholars and departments specialising in Scottish history and Scottish labour history will not be discriminated against compared with other departments and faculties, particulary those that are seen as revenue earners?

Mr. Lang: As one who read history at university, I of course support the funding of history. The important thing is that one learns the lessons of history. I hope that I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that, while funding decisions of the kind that he describes are for the funding council

and not for me, the council has decided to increase the grant allocation for teaching and research to his own former university of Heriot Watt by 9·6 per cent.

Local Government Reform

10. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the timing of his proposals for local government reform; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government have received a number of representations about the timing of our proposals for local government reform, offering a range of views.

Mr. Walker: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the earliest possible date for the introduction of the popular single-tier authorities, which will be nearer to the people and better understood by the people and will get rid of the present confusion with the dual-purpose or two-tier authorities, can only be an advantage to, and will be welcomed by, the majority of people in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend I am sure that he is absolutely right. It is clear that our decision to go in favour of single-tier, all-purpose authorities is widely welcomed around Scotland.

Mr. Wray: Does the Secretary of State intend to set up a commission? During the previous period of local government reform, we had the Wheatley commission, and we had Bains Maude and Patterson Luke looking at management structure. Does the Secretary of State intend to follow a similar course, or will there be a ham and eggs solution for local government reform?

Mr. Lang: No. The Wheatley commission had the task of reducing 426 local authorities of widely disparate and different types to a more rational organisation of 65 authorities. Our task is, therefore, much easier. For that reason, we see no need for a commission in Scotland, just as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales saw no need for a commission in Wales.

Mr. Kynoch: Is my right hon. Friend aware of my visit yesterday to the Under-Secretary of State, our hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), in the company of two representatives of Kincardine and Deeside district council, to present responses from 6,600 homes in Kincardine and Deeside, all of which support single-tier authorities and all of which support a single-tier authority based on the area of Kincardine and Deeside? Does my right hon. Friend agree that in rural areas it is more important to consider geographical area than population when considering the best and most cost-effective way to provide local services?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was aware of his visit and I congratulate him on the assiduous way in which he advances the interests of his constituents. I will take into account all the submissions that have come from that part of the country. My hon. Friend will also be aware that my hon. Friends and I have to take account of a broad range of issues that are applicable across the whole of Scotland in reaching our final decisions. We hope to do that towards the end of the summer. We shall then publish our results.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Secretary of State announce his plans to privatise Scottish water before or after he announces his plans to change Scottish local government? Does he concede that he will privatise against the overwhelming wishes of the Scottish people—including the business community, which wishes water services to remain as a local authority service? Does it not worry the right hon. Gentleman that the only person whom he has persuaded, albeit briefly, to accept the franchising of Scottish water is the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government have reached no view on the future of water and sewerage services. We have published a consultation paper, to which there have been many responses, and we are now analysing those responses carefully. The process is bound to take some time. We will bring forward our proposals in the summer and the House will then have an opportunity to consider them.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I know that my right hon. Friend listens carefully to the views of Opposition Members. Has he had a full submission from the Labour party and from other Opposition parties about how they wish local government to be set up? How many Opposition Members have written to my right hon. Friend asking for a particular form of local government in their area?

Mr. Lang: That is a very shrewd question. We have heard a great deal about what Labour Members are against, but there has been a severe lack of positive and constructive suggestions from them—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—until it comes to their own areas, and self-interest then comes running through strong and fast.

Mr. Hood: May I mention a little bit of self-interest? Are not the Government overcutting to fund the new local government reform? Some £14 million of road borrowing consent was cut in Strathclyde regional council, which means that the Stonehouse bypass will be cancelled once again and the Ayr road, which affects the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), is also cancelled. That is what the Government are doing, and they should stop trying to kid us that they are not.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the question of self-interest. I know that he and the Clydesdale district have advanced a strong case for single-tier status for their area. On the question of cuts, the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. Funding for local government this year has been running at a level substantially higher than the current rate of inflation. The Ayr road will feature in the roads programme which is to be published very shortly.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Secretary of State now willing to apologise to the House and to the Scottish people for the publication of the discredited and disgraceful document on cost prepared by Touche Ross? More important, is he willing to publish details of the letter from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury asking him to cut £700 million from his budget over the next two to three years? Will he concede that proceeding with local government reform at this time would be an act of monumental stupidity as we face a financial crisis created by that lot on the Government Benches?

Mr. Lang: If it is publication of correspondence that the hon. Gentleman is after, he has come to the wrong party. I am sorry about that. With regard to the cost of local government reform, the Touche Ross report was published with a very clear indication from the Government that further work might well be needed to refine the figures. In the light of further information, there are suggestions that the figures may not be quite so accurate as was originally indicated—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—but the underlying trend is in no way changed by subsequent information. What is indicated by most submissions is that a small number of large authorities would not create such huge savings as was indicated, and that a large number of small authorities would not be so costly as was indicated. It is absolutely clear that the figures used by the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)—additional costs said to range between £400 million and £600 million—are absolute rubbish.

Village Schools

11. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further assistance he proposes to enable local authorities to maintain small village schools in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend already has regard to the needs of rural areas by taking sparsity of population and the percentage of pupils in small schools into account in distributing Government support for local authority spending. We are issuing guidelines for devolved school management today.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister acknowledge the value of village schools in underpinning rural communities, notwithstanding the way in which consultation processes have been carried out by local authorities and notwithstanding their excuses in terms of educational need? Does the hon. Gentleman understand that rural education authorities are strapped for cash and cannot afford to keep some rural schools open? The Borders education authority is thinking of closing St. Abbs school and Heiton school in my constituency. Will the hon. Gentleman look very carefully at those proposals from the point of view of the Scottish Education Department? Will he come to the villages of St. Abbs and Heiton and talk to regional councillors, villagers and parents to assess for himself the damage that would be done by the closure of either school?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I realise that rural communities attach the greatest importance to their schools, but such areas are not immune from decline in school rolls and it is for local democracy and local authorities to determine provision of education in their areas. The Secretary of State is not entitled to intervene, except in a few cases in which the Secretary of State's consent is required by statute; for example, in the case of primary schools, such consent is required if a school to which it is proposed to transfer pupils is more than five miles from the school proposed for closure, or where a school is 80 per cent. full. I will be visiting schools in Scotland, and if the hon. Gentleman has particular proposals to make, perhaps he could let me know in due course. However, the Secretary of State has no plans at present to change the statutory arrangements.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: In the case of my former primary school, I do not like the mathematical approach that the Scottish Office appears to adopt towards investment in primary education. There is a vast dividend in decency, manners and public responsibility to be derived from teaching in primary schools in rural areas. If we are to prevent crime, it would be very wise to spend much more in that area than is proposed by mathematics.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Expenditure per pupil has increased by more than half in real terms since 1978-79. Expenditure on educational building has increased from £61·3 million in 1988 to £82·8 million in 1992-93. However, we will bear the comments of my hon. and learned Friend very much in mind.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister recall that there are a large number of small village schools in my large rural constituency? Does he agree that there is much greater likelihood of those rural schools staying open if, under the reorganisation of local government, we have an all-Ayrshire authority as recommended by four out of five Ayrshire Members, by three out of four district councils, by Enterprise Ayrshire and by the vast majority of the people who wrote to the Secretary of State, as I did? And is the Minister aware that I would have made all those points if I had been called on the last question?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We will certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's bid, but that will, of course, be a matter for a future decision. With regard to rationalisation in Ayrshire, local circumstances and educational considerations will have to be a top priority so far as the regional council is concerned.

Primary Schools

12. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Current expenditure per primary pupil in 1990-91 was 50 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979. The latest figure is £1,508 per primary pupil.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend say how those excellent figures square with claims of cuts in primary education in recent years?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, we have a very good record in that matter. Expenditure per pupil has increased enormously. It is particularly significant today, the day before Scots universities and further education colleges come under Scottish Office control, that Scots schools produce proportionally more young people who have obtained the normal entry qualification for higher education. The figure is 27 per cent. of school leavers in Scotland compared with 22 per cent. south of the border. That is a testimony to the effectiveness and strength of the Scottish education system.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Visiting primary schools in my constituency, I have found that the level of dedication among the teachers is second to none. However, I often hear complaints from teachers who say that the problems would be better resolved if school maintenance were

considered. Sometimes the facilities in which the pupils and teachers have to work leave a lot to be desired. I put that down to the fact that the local education authority has been starved of finance and I hope that central Government will put in more finance to help those dedicated teachers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are today issuing guidelines for devolved school management to schools and authorities in Scotland. That can decidedly help in the circumstances to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Any scheme for devolved management should continue to make appropriate funding available to meet the needs, for example, of maintenance of such schools. Those authorities that have pioneered pilot schemes have proved that they are working well and have gained the confidence of the schools taking part.

Nuisance Telephone Calls

13. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions for nuisance telephone calls have been taken out in the Elgin area in each of the past six months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During the months of September, October and December 1992, and January and February 1993, there were no such prosecutions in Elgin sheriff court or Moray district court. In November 1992, however, there were two such prosecutions—one in Elgin sheriff court and the other in Moray district court.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. I do not suppose that a nice young man like my hon. Friend has ever been pestered by unwanted telephone calls, even from double glazing salesmen. He will know, however, that that remarkable record has been achieved because British Telecom has piloted a new system of telephones in Elgin which display the number of the caller. Just by sprinkling 500 of those throughout the population, nuisance calls have been cut to almost nil because we can now pin the heavy breathers down. Will he join me in congratulating British Telecom on piloting that excellent scheme? We hope that, like many innovations that start in Scotland, it will be transferred to the British Isles generally so that we may all benefit from it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is correct. The scheme in Elgin, which involved 500 customers, ends today and the results will now be assessed. Our first impressions are that it has been extremely well received and that similar schemes should be implemented elsewhere.

Mr. Donohoe: Why is similar instrumentation illegal in this country and cannot be connected to the British Telecom network?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not aware of the problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I will look into it. As I said, it has been an extremely valuable scheme which should be taken forward. As my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) explained, the telephone number of the caller is flashed up, but I think that the hon. Gentleman is aware of that. There are problems for those who are ex-directory for security and other reasons, but they can have their numbers excluded.

Manufacturing Output

14. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the change in the level of manufacturing output in Scotland over the last five years.

Mr. Stewart: Manufacturing output in Scotland increased by more than 13·5 per cent. in the five years between 1986 and 1991.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that encouraging response. Is he aware that many people wishing to invest in manufacturing look to Scotland because of the area's fine history in manufacturing over the centuries and because of the work ethic and skills of the Scottish people? What steps are the Scottish Office taking to identify areas that are rich and ripe for import substitution—that is, to substitute goods that we import with goods that we can produce in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks, especially as his knowledge of manufacturing industry is widely appreciated across the Floor of the House and outside. I refer him to the strategy document published by Scottish Enterprise, which refers to Scotland's outstanding record on exports, which reached their highest ever level in 1991, and points to areas with potential for import substitution. I can best answer my hon. Friend by saying that Scotland should develop as a niche economy, indentifying the best opportunities for a small economy operating competitively in European and world markets.

Mr. Davidson: What is the Minister prepared to do to help maintain manufacturing in the west of Scotland? In particular, are the Government prepared to undertake any activity to help maintain Rolls-Royce employment levels in the area? What is the Scottish Office prepared to do to try to provide Kvaerner, Govan with the order for the new helicopter carrier about to be ordered by the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman and I have discussed that latter point, which is bound to be a competitive decision by the Ministry of Defence. In answering his earlier question about Rolls-Royce, I emphasise what the company has said—that it wishes to be, and is determined to be, competitive in a highly competitive world market and that it believes that both its plants, at Hillington and East Kilbride, have a continuing role in that endeavour. Of course, redundancies are always regrettable, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in supporting the general strategy of Rolls-Royce in ensuring that it remains competitive in world markets.

A75 (Dual Carriageway)

15. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to provide a dual carriageway on the A75 between Stranraer and Gretna Green.

Mr. Lang: At the present time, there are no proposals to provide a dual carriageway on the A75. The A75 was substantially upgraded during the 1980s and schemes planned for future years on this route will improve safety and overtaking opportunities further.

Mr. Ross: Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate how much the great improvements on that road over the years have been welcomed by people from Northern Ireland? Does he agree that due to the success of the Larne-Stranraer and Larne-Cairnryan routes, the increase in the volume of traffic has overwhelmed the speed of improvement on that important Euroroute? Does he recognise that a high-quality infrastructure of roads is necessary for development? Will he, therefore, make every effort to install as much dual carriageway as possible on that route in the near future? If money is available from Europe, when he is looking for it—as I hope he will—will he take with him his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and treat the road through to Belfast as one Euroroute? That is the best way to approach the whole problem.

Mr. Lang: I understand absolutely the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. As I am sure he will appreciate, he and I have a great affinity of interest in the matter. We have spent substantial sums on the route—about £85 million has been spent on the A75 since the Government came to office, and we have further plans for continuing work on the road. We are upgrading the A74 to motorway standard and we also have plans to spend more resources on the A76 and the A77. I share the hon. Gentleman's view about the importance of a good infrastructure, and it is something to which I am committed.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Scottish Office informed me by telephone today that the Secretary of State would be making a statement on the transfer of the Scottish prison service to an executive agency; that would be done in my constituency tomorrow at Polmont at the Scottish prison service college. The impression was that the statement and the framework document would be available to the House for discussion. It appears that once again the Secretary of State is using a planted question to provide the information. It is on the Order Paper but the answer will not be available until after today's sitting is finished. Is that not once again an abuse of the House by the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Madam Speaker: On about three occasions in the last 10 parliamentary days I have made it clear to the House that it is for a Minister himself to decide how an announcement is made. Whether it is done at the Dispatch Box or by means of a written answer is up to the Minister. It has nothing to do with the Chair. I am sorry that I continually have to repeat myself on these matters. I regret that a point of order is used for that purpose.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 19 January, at column 261 of *Hansard*, you responded to a point of order by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), deploring the practice of civil servants putting in questions on behalf of Ministers. I have a letter, of which a copy has been made available, in which the private secretary to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment not only asks the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) to table a question but encloses the answer. The question was tabled subsequently by the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman). I should like your guidance on whether it is an abuse of the House when the Government and civil servants conspire to stitch up the business of the House.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will know that, in my earlier ruling, I deprecated the action referred to, on the sound grounds that the question itself had not been signed by the hon. Member. As I understand it, that is not so in this case. There is nothing wrong with a question being tabled for written answer, so long as the question has been tabled properly. The hon. Gentleman should not confuse this with the earlier incident; it is not the same. In the earlier instance, the question form was pre-signed. In this case, there is nothing wrong with it, so long as the question has been signed and tabled properly.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have received a letter from the Minister of State, Home Office, which says:

> "Following the practice agreed by the House in relation to other executive agencies, written questions about matters that fall within the Director-General's delegated responsibilities will normally be referred to him for reply."

That is about the question of the prison service, and the letter is an explanation of the new circumstances.

As Speaker, you are in charge of the procedure for allowing questions to be submitted and the provision of answers. I am concerned that there may have been a practice, albeit a controversial one, in which questions have been allocated by Ministers to the directors-general of various executive agencies. Surely that was limited to those specific executive agencies which have to some degree been agreed by the House, albeit with great reluctance.

It now appears that the Home Office is simply allocating responsibilities to a new director-general for prison services without any consultation with the House, and presumably without any consultation with you, Madam Speaker. In that way, a serious erosion is taking place of the accountability by the House for Government administration, because, at the end of the day, the Government will still have responsibility for those executive agencies. The Minister is shifting responsibility to the executive agency by allowing questions to be answered in this way.

I ask you to examine the matter, because it is a creeping erosion of accountability and a serious removal of powers from hon. Members, especially those on the Back Benches.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised a long point of order and has not, I regret, done me the courtesy of letting me see the letter. I have not seen the letter. If he sends it to my office, I shall look at it.

Mr. Cryer: Certainly, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You have made yourself clear, following the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty). The Secretary of State, who has not remained for further points of order, must be aware that it is entirely unacceptable for him to make major announcements on the Forestry Commission by way of a pointed question to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Monklands (Mr. Knox) yesterday and the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) today.

With your normal sensitivities, Madam Speaker, you will know that the Scottish prison officers, among others, are concerned about Government policy and that the Government should simply leave a paper in the Vote Office at 3.30 and tell the House nothing whatever. That is an abuse of the House and of the Chair, and you have our support on that.

Madam Speaker: Order. I fear that the hon. Gentleman is now moving into matters of policy, over which I have no authority. As he said, I have made myself clear on this issue not only today but on numerous occasions in the past two weeks.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will remember that two days after the previous Scottish questions, the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) raised a point of order on a Friday morning complaining that one of our Ministers had challenged him on all sorts of funny goings on in Monklands council. Can you confirm that, following today's Scottish questions, he will not be able to do that, because he had every opportunity——

Madam Speaker: Order. I always knew that points of order were getting out of hand, but this is certainly going over the top.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request from the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the reported

deaths and chaos on the humanitarian convoys out of Srebrenica? The mayhem which is apparent again today clearly demonstrates two urgent requirements: first, the United Nations must arrange a regular relief lifeline to not only Srebrenica but Gorazde and other enclaves——

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to pursue that matter across the Floor of the House. He has rightly asked me a direct question. I must answer him: no, I have not been informed today that a Minister wishes to come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement on the matter.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have been receiving letters from my constituents in which they complain about a letter which they have received as a result of a direct mail shot from the Secretary of State for Scotland. He has sent thousands of letters to my constituents, in which he has asked them to write to him. I agree, of course, that they can write to Conservative central office, but I am concerned that they will be writing to the Secretary of State at the Scottish Office, where civil servants will be employed to respond to them. How can I raise the matter in the House, Madam Speaker? The letters are an abuse of my right to represent my constituency.

Madam Speaker: We shall soon begin a number of Adjournment debates. The hon. Member might try to raise the matter in one of those debates.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Open Skies

That the draft Treaty on Open Skies (Privileges and Immunities) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Northern Ireland

That the draft Access to Health Records (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Social Security (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Social Security

That the Income-related Benefits Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 315) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instrument, &c.

National Health Service (Scotland)

That the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 522) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (Dental Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 523) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 524) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Grant-maintained Schools

That the Education (Grant-maintained Schools) (Finance) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 568) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Education (Grant-maintained Schools) (Finance) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 843) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

National Health Service

That the National Health Service (Determination of Regions) Amendment Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 571) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (District Health Authorities) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 572) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the National Health Service (Determination of Districts) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 574) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope].*

Question agreed to.

Second Chamber (Reform)

3.40 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the abolition of the House of Lords and its replacement by a Second Chamber elected on the basis of selections from regional party lists of candidates in proportion to the votes cast for the House of Commons.

The Bill is designed to replace the other place with a democratically elected second Chamber by means of a regional list system of proportional representation.

We have grown comfortably accustomed to the ermine-edged quirks of the other place. They are all good chaps: indeed, mostly they are chaps. Whether out of deference to tradition or sheer apathy, there has been no will to reform the other place. Yet it is an anachronism. It is a rather fey survivor from the pre-democracy days; it is a constitutional dinosaur. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) wryly said:

"The House of Lords is the British Outer Mongolia for retired politicians."

I would go further and suggest that it is proof positive of life after death.

The House of Lords is unique, because no other parliamentary democracy has such an arrangement. No other parliamentary democracy rewards individuals with a seat at the centre of power on the basis of who their great-great-great-great-grandparents were. There are 759 such hereditary Peers, discreetly labelled Peers by Succession, of whom only 17 are women. For the past 35 years, 388 life peerages—only 60 of whom have been women—have been created. They owe their position to prime ministerial patronage rather than to democratic election. If we add 26 archbishops and bishops, 16 hereditary Peers of First Creation and 19 Life Peers under the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876, the numerical power of the other place is a staggering 1,208, which is almost double that of this place.

Not surprisingly, most Peers are Conservative. The latest figures show that 478 take the Tory Whip. There are 116 Labour Peers, 59 Liberal Peers and 272 Peers who are Cross-Benchers. Fewer than half of them bother to turn up. Although many are hard-working, the truly powerful are the backwoodsmen who sit idly at home on their huge estates, awaiting the clarion call of the Tory Whips to summon them to overturn the will of the working Peers. When crucial votes take place, like fungi in the dark, the number of Peers mushrooms to save the skin of successive Tory Governments.

This practice has not diminished with the creation of life peerages, as votes in the other place in the 1960s on what was the London Government Bill and on the sanctions order that applied to what was then Southern Rhodesia demonstrated. In addition, the decision of the other place to abolish the Greater London council bears testimony to that. The poll tax is another example. That constitutional monstrosity passed through Parliament with the help of the other place. It is perhaps appropriate that we are celebrating its abolition today.

What a shambles and an insult to the image of democratic government everywhere. Successive Tory Governments—the current one are no exception—have used the House of Lords in the same way as a drunk uses a lamp post—for support rather than illumination.

I would not be too fussed if individuals still claimed the title of Lord if they had been awarded or had inherited peerages. That title, however, should not entitle them to a vote at the centre of power. Total abolition is not the answer. There is a need for a second chamber to scrutinise legislation and, more and more importantly, to act as a constitutional check. That does not happen now. The last time the Lords made a fuss and used their power of delay was on the War Crimes Bill in May 1991. They threw it out by 207 votes to 74. The Government merely re-introduced the Bill, using their powers under the Parliament Act 1911.

Although they pay lip service to tradition, the Conservatives regard the Lords as irrelevant—not so much Mr. Balfour's poodle, more Mr. Major's mutt. So we need an elected second chamber. It should be similar to senates in other mature democracies. I think of Australia and America, for example. It should be a check and balance on the excesses of the Executive, but one which does not duplicate—or, more importantly, challenge—the responsibilities of the Commons. It could also draw on the experience of Germany's second chamber, the Bundesrat, which provides a direct regional input from the regional governments, the Landers.

The Lords should be replaced with a new second chamber, or senate, elected from party lists according to the size of the regional vote which each party polled at a general election. It would be simple. The same vote given to a parliamentary candidate locally would be allocated to that party in a regional pool. The percentage of that pool received by each party would determine each party's allocation of second chamber members from the relevant region.

Some may argue, "If this is such a good idea, why not advocate it for the House of Commons, too?" The answer is simple. The objection to the list principle for the House of Commons is that it would break irrevocably the link between the Member of Parliament and his or her local constituency, so undermining democratic accountability. That valid objection does not apply to members of the second Chamber, because they do not have any constituency duties or local representative responsibilities.

I believe that such a list system would not only give a voice to the regions of Britain, but allow action to secure fair representation for women and ethnic minorities. For example, each party could select its regional lists for the second chamber by democratic vote of either regional memberships or regional conferences. It could build in quotas, thus satisfying legitimate claims for equal representation within the party in a way that cannot be enforced, while retaining the local autonomy which is such an important tradition for the selection of Members of Parliament.

The result would be to meet in full aspirations for proportional representation in at least one half of Parliament. A new second chamber could also genuinely claim legitimacy as a constitutional check because it would represent literally all sections of political opinion. By such an approach, we could retain the advantages of single-member seats in the House of Commons—with or without electoral reform here—and the prospect of being able to form a single-party Government, together with a reform of the second Chamber which satisfied the demand for fairer representation.

A reformed second Chamber could have about 400 votes. On the basis of the distribution of votes in the last general election, there would be about 170 Conservatives,

140 Labour, 70 Liberals and 20 others. In Wales, for example, Labour would have 12 seats, the Tories would have six, the Liberals would have three and Plaid Cymru would have two.

Radical reform is vital because, despite this being the mother of Parliaments, British democracy is completely discredited. *[Interruption.]* Oh yes, it is. Unelected peers reflect an elitist state, which is one of the most unaccountable and secretive in the democratic world. It wields power by a combination of the royal prerogative, massive patronage and centralisation, with only a nod towards democracy.

One thing is certain: the demand for democratic reform will not go away. The question for the House is not whether the Lords will be reformed and replaced, but when. The House should cease acting like Canute holding back the tide of history, and replace its ossified appendage by supporting the Bill.

3.48 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): What a load of drivel, Madam Speaker. There were three things wrong with the hon. Gentleman's speech and nothing right with it. First, the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) wants to enhance the power and prestige of the Liberal party—a political party which in Britain gives more commitment and importance to Brussels, Europe and European institutions than to the House and the country. The hon. Gentleman ought to be ashamed of himself.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman wants to introduce proportional representation by the list system. That is even after the debates that we have had in the past few days about the Maastricht treaty—the most important thing to happen to Britain for more than 25 years. A few of us, with the backing of our associations and the confidence to say and do what we believe is right for Britain, are able to represent the people of our constituencies and the country in this House because there is not a list system. If there were, would we not all be creatures of the party bureaucracy, the party hierarchy, central office and Walworth road? Is that what the hon. Gentleman wants?

The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He wants to do away with, destroy or do something rotten with the other place. The House of Lords is a very interesting institution—it allows a second bite at the cherry; it allows us a longer period for scrutiny of legislation; it allows us to look at things in better ways.

The House of Lords is constituted in a way that many hon. Members would not support. It is difficult to support the constitution of the House of Lords, but certainly a House of Lords there should be—and I shall explain why. There is one reason above all others. We are faced with the degradation, the dispersal and the finalisation of the United Kingdom as we are sucked into a European federation. We have been told that the matter has been put before the people of this country. When was it put before them? Was it at the last general election, when the Front Benches were vying with each other in their Euro-fanaticism? Is that when the British people had the opportunity to debate and discuss the issue?

Yes, we can debate and discuss the matter here. We have tabled an amendment that would provide the British people with the opportunity to take a view and to vote on this monstrosity. But what about the Whips and the Labour Front Bench? We know what will happen. There is only one hope for us, and it is that the House of Lords will give us the referendum that this House will deny us. God save the House of Lords. I hope that it has the guts to do its popular and constitutional duty.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose——*

Madam Speaker: Order. I can hear only one voice in opposition.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 79, Noes 77.

Division No. 225] **[3.51 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Berry, Dr. Roger
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Etherington, Bill
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mike Watson and
Mr. John McAllion.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Congdon, David
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Donohoe, Brian H.
Duncan, Alan
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fry, Peter
Garnier, Edward
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hawkins, Nick
Hendry, Charles
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*

Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Khabra, Piara S.
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Livingstone, Ken
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert N
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Winterton and
Mr. Tony Marlow.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Peter Hain, Mr. Nick Ainger, Mr. Roger Berry, Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mr. John Denham, Mr. Paul Flynn, Dr. Kim Howells, Dr. Lynne Jones, Mrs. Jane Kennedy, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Ms Clare Short and Mr. Mike Watson.

Second Chamber (Reform)

Mr. Peter Hain accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the abolition of the House of Lords and its replacement by a Second Chamber elected on the basis of selections from regional party lists of candidates in proportion to the votes cast for the House of Commons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 30 April, and to be printed. [Bill 174.]

Legal Aid

[Relevant documents: The Fifth Report from the Home Affairs Committee on Legal Aid: The Lord Chancellor's Proposals, House of Commons Paper No. 517 of Session 1992-93, and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Scottish Affairs Committee on 23rd March, together with Memoranda, to be published in House of Commons Paper No. 574 of Session 1992-93.]

4.5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move:

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions and Contributions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th March, be approved.

I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th March, be approved.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Amemdment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

That the draft Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Civil Legal Aid (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 565), dated 9th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 788), dated 17th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 789), dated 17th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Advice and Assistance (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 790), dated 17th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be annulled.

We are considering a number of regulations on legal aid —five sets subject to the affirmative resolution procedure and relating to Scotland, and four sets relating to England and Wales, which are subject to the negative resolution procedure and which have been prayed against by the Opposition. I am glad to be able to put the Government's case in support of these resolutions.

Legal aid is the means whereby people on low incomes may be helped to have access to the justice system. I believe that over the years it has been successful in that aim and indeed that our system of legal aid in Great Britain is undoubtedly one of the most generous in the world and the envy of many other countries, including several of our European neighbours.

Over the years, successive Governments have sought to ensure that the system of legal aid represents a level playing field as between Scotland and England and Wales. That, of course, means that there have always been significant differences between the detailed systems in the two countries, since their legal systems are very different. The changes we are bringing forward in the regulations

seek to continue to implement that principle. They are not identical as between England and Wales and Scotland, but they represent the realisation of a broad common policy. I therefore propose to deal first with the position in Scotland before going on to describe the proposed regulations for England and Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department, will deal with the English position in more detail on winding up.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have hardly started, but I shall give way.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way so early in his speech. Does not he recognise that it is monstrous to conflate two debates about two wholly different legal systems and to spend less than three hours debating the entirely different circumstances of Scotland and England and Wales? This is the first step that has been taken since the Government's published papers on constitutional reform, which shows how little has changed under the Conservative party.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The broad principles are the same throughout Britain and, as a United Kingdom Parliament, we are entitled to consider these issues. The basic problem is that the figures have escalated out of all proportion.

On 19 April 1989, I revealed that £54 million was spent on legal aid in Scotland in 1988. With his characteristic directness, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said that that was

"a hell of a lot of money".

[HON. MEMBERS: "Who said that?"] The hon. Member for Linlithgow said that. Of course, it is far more today. In 1991-92, the figure was £86 million and it is about to be £104 million in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will appreciate this point. Nye Bevan said that the language of priorities is the religion of socialism. With greatly increasing expenditure on one service, what is at stake is whether that service should have higher priority than health, education, social work, housing and other essential services. The figures had escalated so much in all parts of Britain that something had to be done. That has been accepted.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Under-Secretary tell us by what standard one measures the proportionality? Is he saying that people have become greedy for legal aid, or does he accept that there is more reason for people to seek legal aid nowadays?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, I am not saying either of those things. I shall give the hon. and learned Gentleman the figures. He will be interested to know that the cost in England and Wales was less than £100 million in 1979, but that, for the year ending today, the figure will be £1,100 million. If expenditure continues to rise, the figure will be nearly £2,000 million by the mid-1990s, so there is a need to contain the large and rapid growth in expenditure. However, I must tell the hon. and learned Gentleman that, under the Government plans, there is no question of legal aid being cut.

I confirm that expenditure in England and Wales will rise by 10 per cent. in each of the next three years, to a total of £1,528 million for 1995-96. Over the same period, we expect the number of acts of assistance in grants of legal aid on advice and assistance to rise from just over 3 million in the current year to about 4 million—an increase of almost 30 per cent.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East) *rose*——

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I develop my argument? Legal aid——

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, I give way to my right hon. Friend.

Sir John Wheeler: The figures that my hon. Friend has just given the House are astonishing. With public sector borrowing at £50 billion a year, it is not tolerable to consider the level of expenditure in the way that he has described. Will he assure the House that there will be a proper system of accountability covering the projected increases to which he alluded, to ensure that the taxpayers' money is properly and fairly used?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. If one takes all the circumstances into account, and in view of the rises in expenditure that will take place, the approach adopted by the Lord Chancellor is certainly not ungenerous.

Legal aid, of course, involved the expenditure of large amounts of taxpayers' funds. Over the past few years, and especially over the past year or so, legal aid expenditure in Scotland rose dramatically. Indeed, it has almost doubled over the past five years. Expenditure on legal aid from public funds was £49 million in Scotland in the year ending 31 March 1988. It rose to £83 million in 1992 and will reach £104 million in the financial year that ends today.

The first two Scots sets of regulations before the House represent a major element in the response to that rise in expenditure.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose*——

Mrs. Ewing *rose*—

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I develop this point?

The Government have a general responsibility to ensure the best use of taxpayers' funds and to set spending priorities accordingly. It is in that context that we have had to consider carefully, as any responsible Government would have to, the recent rises in expenditure on legal aid.

I shall now describe the provisions contained in each of the sets of regulations in a little more detail.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there a relationship between unemployment and the sums in the legal aid budget to which the Minister has referred?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is especially relevant that the most vulnerable should be assisted. I accept that principle, and people on income support levels of income will certainly continue to receive free civil legal aid, advice

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

and assistance. Eligibility will continue to be based on an individual's disposable income——that is, his gross income less various allowances. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the decision to retain a band of contributory advice and assistance to ensure that all people on modest incomes will continue to have access to legal aid in Scotland.

Mr. Menzies Campbell *rose——*

Mrs. Ewing *rose——*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: May I develop what I have to say about some of the regulations first? The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will be able to comment in a moment. I am well aware that he has served on the Scottish Legal Aid Board, and has considerable experience in the matter; I shall give way to him in due course.

The Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions and Contributions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993 adjust the threshold of a person's disposable income below which free civil legal aid is available. They propose that the threshold should be set at £2,293 with effect from 12 April 1993, when the annual adjustments in income support levels under the social security system come into effect. The upper limit will remain unchanged at £6,800—it is higher in personal injury cases, at £7,500—and the maximum contribution that a person between the lower and upper limits will be asked to make towards the cost of his legal aid bill will be raised from one quarter to one third of his disposable income above the lower threshold.

The Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993 similarly change the threshold—this time of weekly disposable income—above which a person is required to pay a contribution for legal advice and assistance. The new disposable income level will be £61 per week. The regulations also describe the scale of contributions to be paid where weekly disposable income exceeds £61 but does not exceed a slightly increased upper disposable income limit of £147. The level of contribution will range from £7 to £86.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The Minister is explaining the regulations in the context of an argument about priorities. What greater priority is there than that a person should have access to the courts of this country, irrespective of his or her means? Is the Minister not aware that, before a person is admitted to legal aid, he must establish probable cause and that it is in the interests of justice that legal aid be awarded to him? If the Minister is concerned about those on income support, does he not realise that these proposals will bite most strongly for those who fall just outside the very limits that he has described? It is these people to whom access to the courts will be denied.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member could perfectly well advance that argument to those who fall just outside the limits now. Wherever you have a cut-off point, there will be resentment among those who fall just outside it. In relation to Scotland, as the Secretary of State made clear a few minutes ago, only 2 per cent. to 3 per cent. of those receiving civil legal aid and advice and assistance now will have no entitlement in future. That affects only some 7,500 people.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): One hundred thousand.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is our best estimate. It is certainly not 100,000, which is a ludicrous exaggeration.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Does my hon. Friend think it relevant in this context that while the cost of legal aid has doubled since 1988-89 in England, by no means have the clients seeking legal aid doubled? The figure is very much smaller than the doubling which we have experienced.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We anticipate that the rise will be from over 3 million in the current year to about 4 million. What has come through is that more and more people are applying for legal aid and for their entitlement, and that the figures of those receiving legal aid will increase by the mid-1990s.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Is my hon. Friend aware that some of us in the House who are not legally qualified have noticed in the past couple of years a growing number of constituents who come to us seeking legal advice because the legal profession has, for certain reasons, including difficulties with legal aid, been unable to assist them? Is he therefore aware that some of us are concerned that this tendency will increase as a result of these measures, and that a number of people, particularly those seeking redress over personal injury, may be unable to seek justice under these arrangements? What proposals has he for reviewing the consequences of the motions that he is asking us to vote on tonight?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I said earlier that the upper limit for somebody who has suffered personal injury is £7,500, which is higher. The effect on eligibility is, as I said, in the region of 2 per cent. to 3 per cent. It may be that my hon. Friend will be seeing a few more constituents. I am sure that, with his ability, he will be able to give them the same assistance that he has given to all his other constituents.

First, all the figures relate to a person's disposable income—that is, his income after allowance has been made for a number of necessary outgoings, such as expenditure on dependants, housing costs, the costs of travel to work and other expenses associated with employment, and a number of others. The calculation will vary according to the circumstances of each individual applicant. An applicant with a disposable income towards the upper end of the scale giving rise to eligibility could well have a gross income of about £15,000 or even more. The levels of eligibility, therefore, continue to represent generous provision. We estimate that 55 per cent. to 60 per cent. of households in Scotland will remain eligible for legal aid under the new proposals.

Secondly, the contributions that are payable are in all cases maximum contributions. We have seen some newspaper comment recently which seems to imply that the maximum contribution levels are in some sense an entrance fee for access to the system of civil justice. That is certainly not the case. As at present, no legally aided person will be required to pay more than the case actually costs. On the other hand, however high the costs of an individual case rise, no one will be required to pay more than the maximum contribution.

Thirdly, our approach has not been to remove significant numbers of people from eligibility for legal aid altogether. We calculate that of the almost 300,000 people in Scotland who have received grants of civil legal aid and/or advice and assistance in 1992-93, only 7,500—2 per cent. to 3 per cent.—would not be eligible under the current proposals.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I know that my hon. and learned Friend has strong views, so I shall give way to him in a second.

The effect of the proposals is that some people who previously made no contribution towards the costs of their case will have to make a contribution, generally a very small one, and that the level of contribution of those who already contribute will rise. That is a fair and even-handed approach.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I am most obliged to my hon. and yet to be learned Friend, who has frequently been my junior and who knows my views. There has always been a terrible gap in legal aid by which people were deprived of the ability to go to law. The proposals increase that gap. My main complaint is as follows. We have a Scottish Lord Chancellor who is the principal Law Officer in England. Why should we take the view that we must imitate his idocies in England when the cost of legal aid in Scotland has not increased, but decreased? If one divides the money that is being spent by the number of people seeking redress, one finds that the figure has gone infinitely down. Can my hon. Friend answer my question?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can, indeed. I have been junior counsel to my hon. and learned Friend and to the Lord Chancellor, as has the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). My hon. and learned Friend has also worked under the Lord Chancellor. I believe that his judgment in this matter is sound. Expenditure on legal aid has doubled in Scotland since 1987-88 and even under the Government's proposals it is forecast to rise to 40 per cent. above the original planned figures for 1992-93 by the mid-1990s. The number of people helped has been rising, and will continue to rise to an estimated total of 425,000 or more in 1995-96.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Has the Minister made these proposals in conjunction with other Government proposals that involve the trade unions? As the Minister knows, the trade unions have an excellent reputation for taking up, for example, industrial injury cases. At the same time that the Government are introducing these proposals, they are requiring the trade unions to spend more on compulsory ballots because they propose to reduce the amount available for the ballots—which they are imposing.

Inevitably, this means that trade unions, which have been excellent self-help organisations, will not be able to spend so much money on legal representation of their members—a field in which they have an unquestionably excellent record. Thus, trade union members, as well as benefiting less from legal aid, will receive less assistance from their organisations. They will be caught on a fork of deprivation when it comes to obtaining justice in civil injury cases.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment, who has just come into the Chamber, will have heard his remarks. My understanding is that trade unions were against accepting funds when they were offered. Perhaps these matters can be followed up with the Department of Employment, as they relate primarily to employment.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I congratulate my hon. Friend and his colleagues on their proposals generally. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that it is always right to disallow the capital value of a principal residence in calculating entitlement to legal aid? In my constituency, there is a widower who has a very low income but owns a house worth £300,000. That person, having obtained legal aid on the basis of low income, was able to harass a neighbour without mercy. As the neighbour—an engineer with a wife and three children to support—was in receipt of the income of a young professional man, he was unable to obtain legal aid for a dispute about a tree on the border between the sites. That is not a level playing field. Surely it is not right that such things should be allowed to happen.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should like to examine the circumstances of the case to which my hon. Friend refers. I hope that it will be possible, in the winding-up speech, to provide a full response.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have given way to many Scotsmen, and I am always glad to give way to the hon. Gentleman. However, I should like to make a little progress first.

The remaining three sets of regulations give effect to the commitment given by the Government during the recent passage of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1993 to extend the scheme of assistance by way of representation to cover the preparation and presentation of a petition by a debtor for the sequestration of his or her estate. The regulations will allow an eligible debtor to obtain the help of a solicitor in completing and submitting the petition forms required by the court. If necessary, the solicitor can also appear in court, on behalf of the debtor, at any hearing relating to the petition.

This assistance is in addition to, and separate from, any preliminary advice that the solicitor may have provided, under the advice and assistance scheme, on the options available to the debtor. The Government's commitment to extend the scheme of assistance by way of representation was welcomed by the Opposition at the time of the passage of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act. I hope that that support will continue in respect of the regulations that are before us today.

Before turning to the four sets of regulations relating to England and Wales, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

Mr. Graham: I have worked with many people who, because of the level of the income, were prevented from going to law. In this regard, I agree with what has been said by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). At the moment, I am dealing with a case involving folk in this situation. Many organisations in Scotland are saying clearly that the

[Mr. Graham]

Minister is wildly wrong and that if these proposals are accepted there will be great injustice and unfairness in Scotland.

The Minister has given a figure of 7,500 people. In my view, that is a doubtful number. Can the Minister give the House an assurance that, if it proves to be wrong, he will instantly take steps to review the legislation? Scottish people who cannot afford legal representation should be provided with it. Let the Minister give us an assurance that everybody in Scotland will be entitled to representation in the courts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I stand strongly by the figures that I have already given to the House. If the hon. Gentleman will let me know about the circumstances of the case in his constituency, I will ensure that it is examined very carefully.

The Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 relating to England and Wales set the lower limit of disposable income, below which legal aid is available without a contribution, at the annual equivalent of the income support personal allowance for a single person aged 25 and over. In 1993-94, that will be £2,293.

The regulations also align allowances for dependants which are made in calculating disposal income for legal aid purposes with income support allowances. They increase the fraction of disposable income payable by way of contribution from one quarter of disposal income in excess of free limit to one third and provide that contributions continue for the life of the case—that is, for as long as the legal aid certificate is in force. They amend the regulations covering assessments and further assessments of means so that they are consistent with the new financial conditions; and, finally, they adjust the table of additional capital disregards for pensioners in line with the new financial limits.

The Civil Legal Aid (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 provide that an area director of the Legal Aid Board may waive payment of contribution where it appears that the costs of the proceedings will not be more than contributions which have been paid. The regulations also amend the payment-on-account scheme to align the periods after which payments may be made to barristers with those applicable to solicitors.

The Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 make the same changes in respect——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister referred to barristers. There are no barristers in Scotland: they are called advocates.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well that matters of substance and correctness or otherwise are not matters for the Chair.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have always said that my hon. and learned Friend is a brilliant man, but not always necessarily correct. I am referring to England, where the term "barristers" is normally used.

The Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 align the free limit with the single adult income support rate, that is £44 a week. They also align dependants' allowances with income support allowances, raise the fraction of disposable income payable as contribution from one quarter to one third and provide for contributions to be paid for so long as the legal aid is in force.

The Legal Advice and Assistance (Amendment) Regulations 1993 set the qualifying limit of disposable income for advice and assistance at £61 for 1993-94. They provide that assistance by way of representation shall be available to applicants with disposable incomes of between £61 and £147 a week, and that applicants with income between those two limits shall pay contributions for the life of the case of one third of the difference between actual disposable income and the lower limit of £61.

It may assist the House if I say a word about the differences between our proposals for Scotland and for England and Wales. In both cases, the changes are designed to address the very considerable increase in the cost of legal aid on both sides of the border. Where there are differences, they reflect differences in the legal systems and in legal aid practice.

In Scotland, we announced on 17 February that we had decided to retain a band of contributory advice and assistance for people whose weekly disposable income lies between £61 and £147. That reflects the greater reliance placed on the advice and assistance scheme in Scotland. On the civil side, many applicants who require to establish the probable cause in law of their proposed action are helped through the advice and assistance scheme, whereas in England limited grants of full civil legal aid are available for that purpose.

On the criminal side, defendants in Scotland who plead guilty are eligible for assistance by way of representation which is part of the advice and assistance scheme, whereas in England that is dealt with through full criminal legal aid. On the question of eligibility for criminal legal aid, the English arrangements for the assessment of income of applicants are broadly similar to those which apply to civil legal aid.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Will the Minister accept that, just as in Scotland, there are great concerns among many people lest we are again hitting people who are just outside the income support level? As in many other areas of life, if one qualifies for income support, one will probably be all right, whereas, if one is just a little outside, one will probably be in trouble or will have much greater difficulty in getting access to justice.

As my hon. Friend said, the amounts involved have escalated. Even so, will he look again at the propositions that have been put forward by the Bar Council and the Law Society to save money, to see whether in future they might provide a better way forward than today's proposals?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Whatever benefit or legal aid system we have, there will be huge objections, wherever the cut-off point is set, from those who are just omitted. That has always been, and always will be, the case. The system will be reviewed in due course, but I cannot hold out any hope in respect of the Law Society's recommendations. In relation to the Law Society of Scotland, I do not understand the basis of its figures. Under the new system, the maximum contribution for

ordinary cases will be £1,502. I do not understand where the Law Society can possibly have got the idea that contributions could be higher than that.

In England, the new regulations will provide for contributions to civil legal aid to continue for the life of the case, rather than being restricted to a contribution based on one year's income, as in Scotland. The equivalent change in Scotland would require amendment to primary legislation. We shall consider in due course whether any further action should be taken on that in the light of experience of the changes in England.

Working within the priorities set for public expenditure, we have set out our aims for legal aid for significant growth and we have targeted the available funds to where we believe they are most needed. We have a legal aid system of which we can rightly be extremely proud. I commend the regulations to the House.

4.37 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I begin by answering the question, which the Minister failed to address, asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I refer to the proceedings of last week's Scottish Select Committee on legal aid eligibility changes, in the report of which Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, the Minister of State, is reported as saying:

"In a recession and when there is greater unemployment, one would expect more people to be eligible for legal aid, and certainly more financial disputes and difficulties at home."

That answers the question eloquently.

In the previous legal aid debate I referred to the last Conservative manifesto, which contained the statement:

"We are committed to enabling people of limited means to have access to justice."

It is clear in the light of the regulations for England and Wales that that manifesto as a guide to what is likely to happen is somewhat less reliable than *Old Moore's Almanac*. What happened in April 1992 no longer applies because the recession is longer and deeper.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that an increase of 10 per cent. over the next three years is insufficient? If so, will he say what increase the Labour party would recommend?

Mr. McFall: The hon. Gentleman should accept that the Conservative manifesto, written in haste in April, was mendacious: it has no validity now. It is clear that people will be taken out of legal aid as a result of the regulations. If they are unamended, that manifesto statement, in its perfidiousness, will rank alongside the Prime Minister's outburst last March when he said that he had no plans to extend the scope of VAT. Just the poor and those on moderate incomes will be left to shiver in the cold in the coming winters, so potentially up to 14 million people in the United Kingdom will be left out of access to the courts. The core issue is eligibility of the public to gain access to the law. Justice is not optional in a society based on the rule of law.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: It is sometimes suggested that civil legal aid has gone up. It has not gone up in Scotland in real terms; it has gone down. We will leave aside criminal legal aid because that may raise another argument. Perhaps I should declare an interest in both. The amount of money cannot be limited because it is impossible to know how many people will fall over a paving stone, or will hit their heads, or will be hit on the head, or what will happen. Therefore, we cannot say that legal aid will go up or down, and we cannot limit it; we cannot say that we are going to brush one tooth.

Mr. McFall: I thank the hon. and learned Member. I refer to his statement last week in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. At paragraph 97 he said:

"You cannot say to people that it is fair you will just give them one loaf of bread and if 3 million people want to eat they only get a crumb each and if 2 million people want to eat they get a crust. That seems to me the attitude to the matter. I do not understand that legal aid is other than a public service which must be given to those who ask for it and require it."

That was said eloquently, and my right hon. and hon. Friends agree with it.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr) *rose*——

Mr. McFall: I shall refer to the hon. Gentleman later; perhaps I will let him intervene then.

The genesis of the regulations, as in England and Wales, lies in the autumn statement. To satisfy the Treasury, at the Law Society national conference in Birmingham in October, the Lord Chancellor said:

"The overall cost of legal aid must be made more affordable. It must be better targeted towards those areas of work where it provides the most cost-effective service."

The buzz word "targeting" is the Government's way of saying there will be cuts. And sure enough, four days after the Lord Chancellor announced his cuts in the other place, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), in a written answer on 16 November, told the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) that he would reduce the free income limit for eligibility from £3,060 per annum to the equivalent income support level of £2,213 per annum. In doing so, he admitted that it was in line with the proposals for England and Wales announced recently by the Lord Chancellor.

However, the system in Scotland is entirely different from the system in England. Scots law has Roman law roots, a distinct jurisprudence, its own statute and case law, a separate court system and a separate system for administering legal aid.

The Government have done no consultation and no research. No one outside Whitehall and St. Andrew's house knew until November what was happening. Indeed, the president of the Law Society, in his appearance before the Scottish Affairs Select Committee last week, made that very point. It all goes back to the autumn statement, when it was said that the recession was longer and deeper than expected.

I shall concentrate on Scotland and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) will deal with England and Wales. The Government's attack on legal aid in Scotland has been disproportionate from the beginning. Criminal legal aid takes 70 per cent. of the budget in Scotland. Yet that is not being touched, and the Government have undertaken no investigation so far into that. I am aware that the president and vice-president of the Law Society have been invited to meet Ministers next week at St. Andrew's house on this subject. But that is a case of bolting the stable door after the horses have gone. As I said, 70 per cent. of budget is not being touched. Since then, the Minister has done a U-turn in restoring advice and assistance in Scotland. I submit that the Government were humiliated into that by public and political opposition in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Department is carrying out a review of criminal legal aid in Scotland?

Mr. McFall: I stated that the Department is undertaking a review, but it is far too late. The regulations will come into effect tomorrow and up to 250,000 people may be affected. If the Minister is sincere about the investigation, he should have a moratorium on the cuts.

Civil legal aid will have to bear the brunt of the cuts. Why? The Government tell us that 4,000 more people have applied for civil aid until March of this year and that they must therefore save £2 million to £3 million. Lord Fraser said that. Is that justified, and what will the consequences be? In his written reply to the hon. Member for Ayr, the Minister said that the legal aid budget had doubled. Let us make it clear that civil legal aid has not doubled. If we take the figures for the past five years, we find that civil legal aid has fluctuated from a baseline of approximately £15·5 million, with a variance of approximately £1 million. Over that five-year period it has increased by less than £900,000 and has decreased in real terms by 20 per cent. There is no justification, therefore, for cutting back.

I asked the House of Commons Library to get me the statistics for the past 10 years. In five of those years, civil payments exceeded the forecast for this year and the cost per case exceeded the £873 projected for each case this year. The proposed figure for this year is therefore an aberration, for various reasons which were adequately explained by the Law Society in its submission to the Select Committee last week.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned criminal legal aid. As I would expect of a man of perspicacity, he has clearly read the proceedings of the Select Committee. I made a number of suggestions as to how the criminal system could be altered to save vast amounts of money. I have made those suggestions frequently. I trust that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends will join us in doing that because there is a massive waste of money, time and resources.

Mr. McFall: I agree with the hon. and learned Member. From memory, I think that he told Lord Fraser that many defence lawyers asked clients to plead not guilty, and that that was one area where improvements could be made. The noble Lord decided not to follow the hon. and learned Gentleman down that path. Let us hope that he decides to do so and that we get the savings that the hon. and learned Gentleman has talked about.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Yet again, the hon. Gentleman is making a most perceptive contribution to a debate on home affairs in Scotland. Does he agree that the cost of legal aid must be related directly to the cost of litigation? If we had a full-scale, wide-ranging review of the civil legal system in Scotland to reduce the costs of litigation, we would immediately bring about circumstances in which we could reduce the cost of legal aid as well.

Mr. McFall: I agree entirely with the hon. and learned Gentleman. As I said earlier, no mention was made of the situation prior to November so there could be no contributions or advice given to the Scottish Office. There was no justification for that.

It is tempting to see legal aid as a lawyer's issue. As a non-lawyer, that does not concern me. Undoubtedly, there are fat-cat lawyers who make some money, not on legal aid but maybe elsewhere. Certainly, lawyers do not suffer from collective shyness, so they can make their own case on that. I am here to talk on behalf of people other than lawyers.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I must declare an interest. Some years ago, I made a modest—indeed, humble—living as a solicitor, part of which came from the legal aid fund. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Perhaps he would care to address this point: some members of the profession, either solicitors or barristers, have milked the system. I shall give an example. In the past, a simple shoplifting case was dealt with by taking instructions from a client and doing the trial, which would be two hearings at the most. One now gets one, two, three or four hearings or remands, and then perhaps one goes to the Crown court. That is the reality. Some lawyers take advantage of the system and have brought this on themselves.

Mr. McFall: I agree that some lawyers take advantage. It is for Parliament to ensure that that system does not prevail in the future.

Why am I arguing at the Dispatch Box? I am here to argue on behalf of the potentially 250,000 Scots who will be affected by the Government's proposals. Who are they? Some would be tempted to say that they are not the very poor, but those who are slightly above the income support level or on moderate incomes.

Sadly, the hon. Member for Ayr has left the Chamber. Perhaps he does not care what he says today, but I care about what he said last week and yesterday. Last week at the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, the hon. Gentleman said rather adequately, but perhaps mistakenly from his viewpoint:

> "I suggest that at present there are many, many people who just cannot afford civil legal aid—people on what you would describe as moderate means and reasonably well off, as seen by some in the community, but people who just cannot afford to go to law on civil matters."

We are here to argue on behalf of those people today. Who are they? The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) says women, and I agree.

Last year, 23,000 people in Scotland received legal aid. Almost 19,000 were family law cases. The proposed changes will hit women and children the hardest. Those affected will include victims of domestic violence, the child caught between angry parents, the person trapped in an abusive relationship, the childless couple who want to adopt and the child abused by an estranged parent. Those people will be involved. Such cases are often emergencies which need immediate court action. Almost all such cases are started by women who have part-time or low-paid employment. The employment statistics published yesterday graphically describe that 22 per cent. of the population work part time and many more than 22 per cent. are low paid.

The Government talk about eligibility and affordability. I would contend that they are two different things. Anyone can book into the Savoy but not everyone can pay for it. That is the difference between eligibility and affordability. The poor and the needy are not the same: the need is greatest for those on moderate incomes and the consequences for them are greater.

Would it not be ironic that if the cuts go through it will be easier for a man to get criminal legal aid to defend a charge of wife or child assault than for a woman to get civil

legal aid to secure the safety of herself and her children in her home? That is iniquitous, but it is the situation that we shall have.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I expect that my hon. Friend has read the report on domestic violence of the Select Committee on Home Affairs which, with a Conservative majority, said:

"In the case of domestic violence, we have no doubt that the new restriction on legal aid will mean that the remedies of the civil courts will effectively be removed for a very large number of victims."

It is a disgrace that when I questioned the Secretary of State for Scotland about the matter on 3 March I was told that the changes would have no effect on the eligibility of that category.

Mr. McFall: My hon. Friend makes my point. Where will women in such situations go? They will go to the local authority for housing. Local authorities already face sharp rises in applications for housing under homelessness legislation. They are already under pressure and stretched. With the increased demand, they are likely to raise the level of proof required by women and others to establish homelessness. Some local authorities insist that women start court proceedings to put the husband out of the home and want affidavits and proof from solicitors.

Where do women go at present? Do they go to the Women's Aid Federation? In Glasgow in 1992, 1,000 women were turned away from the federation. In Scotland in 1992, 22,000 people went to the federation for assistance. The Women's Aid Federation freely admits that it could not adequately cope with that situation. What are the Government doing about it? They are condemning women and children to stay in violent relationships. It would not be over-dramatising to say that someone somewhere may be killed under such pressure—it could be a woman attacking her husband or a husband attacking his wife—because the Government have decided to sit on their hands and have people sitting in their homes with nowhere to go. What will be the effect on children? The growth of children will be stunted. What will be the effect of that situation on children's personalities? The Government have no answer.

Many bodies in Scotland have submitted their views to the Government and they all went unheeded. The Scottish Association for Mental Health contacted me yesterday —*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) says that he is not surprised. Is that sympathetic or what we consider pejorative? Is that contempt for the Scottish Association for Mental Health? If it is, I will allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene. It was a despicable comment.

The Scottish Association for Mental Health contacted me because it wished its clients and the people involved to be catered for. I will give the hon. Gentleman an example. The association is concerned about the group of people who receive invalidity benefits and who could be badly affected by the changes—people who are unable to work because of mental health problems who could be entitled to invalidity benefit if they have paid the appropriate contributions.

The invalidity benefit ranges from £55·15 for a person over 60 to £65·70 for someone under 40. Under the present rules, older people are exempt from making any contribution for legal costs if their income is below the qualifying limit of £3,060 per annum. However, younger people who receive the higher level of benefit would have to make a contribution of £89. Under the proposed changes, older people will earn more than the annual qualifying limit of £2,293 per annum and will have to pay £200 towards the cost of a mental health hearing while younger people on invalidity benefit will have to pay £300·85. To people on such an income level, that figure is unthinkable. I must condemn Lord Fraser when he said that £300·85 is a small contribution. In our experience, £300 represents a large, if not impossible, contribution for a person earning slightly more than £65 a week. The stress of having to pay such an amount can be enormous for some people.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McFall: I think that I have given way enough to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

People resort to the courts in extreme circumstances, often when there is no other means of salvaging the wreckage of their lives. They go to the courts when they are treated unfairly and they expect society to help in redressing the balance. In short, they go to seek justice. That is recognised in a letter which I received this week from the Episcopalian Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway. He said that we as Christians have a special duty to be a voice for those who are the least noticed in society. We are concerned about the danger that is posed to the civil rights of disabled and disadvantaged groups, who under these cuts will no longer be eligible for legal aid in civil actions. I suggest that Conservative Members read the reports of the Select Committees on Home Affairs and on Scottish Affairs dealing with legal aid. They underline the point made by the bishop.

In short, people are looking for justice. Throughout the ages, every citizen of a civilised society has had the fundamental right to expect help from civil authorities to achieve justice. By their proposals, the Government are excluding a section of society from one of the basic rights of citizenship.

I began by referring to the autumn statement, and I shall finish with the remarks of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The right hon. Gentleman is a confident young Cabinet Minister who deigned to appear on "Newsnight" on 12 November. He said:

"Legal aid is not a high priority for this Government."

That statement fills us—the Opposition—with despair. More important, it fills with despair millions of people who are begging for justice or for access to the courts to secure justice. The Government's attitude will blight and possibly wreck their lives. That is why we shall vigorously oppose the Government on this issue.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Many hon. Members have expressed their wish to speak in the debate. I ask that those who catch my eye exercise some self-restraint in relation to the length of their speeches.

5.1 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): First, I declare an interest as a practising barrister who derives some income from legal aid.

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

In the autumn statement on 12 November, my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor announced that his proposals would curb the rise of legal aid costs. His proposals were greeted with horror. On 3 February they were attacked as

"draconian, deplorable and wrong in principle"

by the Lord Chief Justice. On 4 February, the *Daily Mirror* thundered:

"Law aid axe puts millions at risk."

The Times, with traditional understatement, stated, "Legal aid plans opposed." On 6 February, *The Guardian* asserted that the plans

"would deprive 7 million of free legal aid and impose increased charges on a further 7 million."

The next day, on Sunday 7 February, *The Observer* headline read:

"No justice for 12 million if Mackay cuts legal aid."

Hundreds of solicitors wrote to hon. Members on both sides of the House. They were reported in the newspapers as saying that 14 million would be excluded from access to legal aid, that justice would be too expensive for all but the rich and the destitute, and that in a criminal trial

"you might as well plead guilty because you will not be able to defend your case properly."

They alleged, apparently, that the disabled and the sick would be denied legal aid if their incomes came to over £61 a week.

The House was lobbied by members of the Save Legal Aid campaign, which was supported by about 40 organisations, including citizens advice bureaux, Shelter, the Trades Union Congress, the British Association of Social Workers, Age Concern and the Bar Council. Almost everyone having attacked the controversial proposals, *The House Magazine* reported that

"Lord MacKay of Clashfern must have felt like a heavily impaled dartboard."

As there was clearly public alarm and as the job of the Select Committee on Home Affairs is to scrutinise the work of the Home Office, the Northern Ireland Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Committee decided to examine the proposals as quickly as it could and to report to the House before this debate. That we speedily did on 9 March, three weeks ago. I hope that hon. Members will now be more fully informed. We took oral evidence—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members will be none the wiser, but they will be more fully informed.

The Committee took oral evidence from both branches of the legal profession and from the Lord Chancellor on 24 February. We, the Committee, read written memoranda sent to us by many organisations and individuals. We would have taken more evidence if we had had time to do so.

We concluded that the quantification of the numbers of those who would be deprived of legal aid was subjective, depending on what it took someone who was called upon to make a contribution to decide not to pursue the matter. We concluded, however, that the eligibility cuts would deprive some ordinary people of the access that they now enjoy to the law. It seemed, in practical terms, that as many as 150,000 people would not receive legal aid, including some of the 100,000 who would be cut from the green form scheme. In short, the numbers deprived would be nothing like the 14 million mentioned in the alarmist allegations. I was surprised that the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) echoed those allegations. As 14 million would not seek access to the courts, it is absurd to say that 14 million will be deprived of anything.

It was clear also that the sick and the disabled with incomes of more than £61 a week would not suffer because disposable income would be assessed, not gross income stemming from whatever benefits they receive.

We accept that the Lord Chancellor is faced with a legal aid budget that is apparently spiralling out of control. The cost of legal aid has risen from less than £500 million in 1988 to over £1·1 billion in 1992, a rise of 135 per cent. It seems that the budget is likely to increase to £2 billion by 1995-96 if nothing is done. That would be a rise of 68 per cent. in the provision of civil legal aid when the retail prices index has risen by only 27 per cent.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Does my hon. and learned Friend remember paragraph 23 of the report, which states:

"The Lord Chancellor emphasised to us that the limits for free and contributory legal aid and advice related to disposable income, a point which some of his critics appear to have overlooked. Disposable income is calculated by allowing costs against gross income. We were told that allowable costs included tax, national insurance, dependants, maintenance payments, rent or mortgage, council tax, some other housing costs, fares to work, subscriptions to unions or professional bodies, pension fund contributions and (on a discretionary basis) the costs of child-minding, repayment of loans for home improvements and school fees."?

Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that disposable income is a much smaller sum than gross income and other forms of net income?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I thank my hon. Friend for filling out the details of that which I was skirting.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): A couple with two children with an income of £21,000 might well qualify for contributory legal aid when the deductions are taken into account.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I thank my hon. Friend for filling out the details even further. As I am trying to keep my speech short, I hope that I shall be forgiven if I do not go into all the details.

We, the Select Committee, concluded that the cuts were unfortunate. We found that they did not sit easily with the Government's strategy to make the consumer and the citizen generally more aware of his or her rights and more tenacious of them. In our view, the legal aid scheme exists to ensure that ordinary people can have the protection of the law. It gives many people access to the law and underpins justice and the freedom of the individual. It has obviously been a great success. More and more people have been helped by the scheme. The numbers have risen from 3·14 million five years ago to an estimated 4·1 million for 1995, even after the Lord Chancellor's changes.

The Committee looked ahead to the immediate future. My colleagues and I were struck that no one seemed to know in enough detail why the costs were rising so rapidly. We suggested that urgent work needed to be undertaken to find the answers.

We thought it a great pity that the legal profession and the Lord Chancellor's Department had not quite got their acts together. We hoped that out report might help to bang heads together so that both sides might co-operate in undertaking an inquiry into the scope for savings and efficiency in the way in which legal services are delivered

and how the courts operate. Radical changes might be the result. We felt that both sides needed to be prepared to commit themselves to such changes. But both the professions and the Lord Chancellor seem willing to start the process. We welcome that.

Mr. Alex Carlile: While we are talking about civil legal aid, does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that virtually every bill for civil legal aid, whether from solicitors or counsel, is scrutinised by an official who is appointed essentially by the Government so that there is far less scope for fraud in the civil legal aid scheme? Does he agree that, in the absence of any evidence of lawyers acting improperly in claiming their fees, the scheme should continue much as before? Does he further agree that there is an enormous amount of room for efficiency savings in the courts? For example, pre-trial reviews are effective in civil cases.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Yes, I accept what the hon. and learned Gentleman says. We did not find any fraud in the legal professions. We probably did not investigate for long enough to discover any. We were looking at what is happening now and what immediately could be done about it.

We felt that although it was too late to do anything about the orders that we are debating today, which are due to come into force on 12 April, if agreed savings were found between the professions and the Lord Chancellor's Department, it might be possible to restore the cuts in eligibility in real terms in the future. We said that the Government should set themselves that goal. If not, they would not achieve their manifesto commitment to give people of limited means greater access to the law, not less access to the law. Greater access means providing advice and assistance either free or at a price which they can afford.

We had a particular anxiety about the Lord Chancellor's proposals to end the contributory part of the green form scheme. That could affect access to legal services for up to 100,000 people, just at the time when it is most necessary because it can head off many legal actions, if the advice achieves a certain result. We could not see what objection there was to people making a contribution, if they could afford some, but not all of the costs.

We could not see any convincing reason why the Lord Chancellor proposed to leave the scheme in existence in Scotland for tapering off contributions, but to end it completely in England and Wales so that people will have no access to the green form scheme if their income is more than about £61 a week. Such discrimination in favour of the Scots by a Scot we found to be carrying kith and kinship too far. We recommended that such discrimination should cease. We are, after all, a united country.

We noticed in passing that a large part of the legal aid budget was eaten up by VAT. As VAT merely transfers public funds from the Treasury to the Lord Chancellor's Department and back to the Treasury, it serves no practical purpose except to complicate matters and boost bureaucratic costs. We were pleased to hear that the Lord Chancellor thought its removal worthy of consideration.

Of course, there is a great deal more wrong with the legal aid system. We had time to examine and report on only some of it. As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, we make a lot more law in Parliament than we used to. We give more people more rights and make people more aware of them. It should not surprise us that they take advantage of that and, therefore, claim more legal aid.

However, too much money is being wasted. The money could often be better allocated. Furthermore, there is an inherent injustice about a system which encourages one party to a legal dispute to take legal action confident in the belief that it will cost him nothing or hardly anything, against another party who has to pay all his costs and who, if he wins, will receive not a penny of damages or costs. Justice should be open to all, not just the rich and the poor but the person in between.

We simply do not know how many people with a good case never bring it or defend themselves with it because they cannot afford to do so in case they lose and they cannot be helped by legal aid. That is the other side of the coin to those who are unjustly treated by the system because they cannot afford to contribute to legal aid, or because legal aid is simply not available. On that issue neither I nor the members of the Home Affairs Select Committee could offer immediate constructive suggestions. The matter needs a full and detailed study. Perhaps something will come out of the Runciman royal commission on that issue.

But many avenues for saving legal aid waste should be explored. Other hon. Members will want to speak, so I shall mention them only briefly. First, instead of paying criminal legal aid with inadequate assessment of means, we could be much more thorough. If a case is likely to cost the tax payer millions of pounds, those involved in large criminal inquiries might be invited to produce a thorough breakdown of their means and assets, with the assistance of a state investigator, before they are awarded hundreds of thousands of pounds in legal aid. We might be surprised how many people would not choose to have their affairs investigated and would either pay the lawyers privately or decide to plead guilty whereas if they had got a free defence they might have had nothing to lose by pleading not guilty.

Secondly, in civil cases, the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 provided for conditional fees. That provision has not been brought into effect. It might help some. Clients may negotiate with solicitors a no-win, no-fee arrangement. The Bar is chary about that, but the provision is on the statute book, so let us introduce it.

Thirdly, a contingency fund could be set up, financed by a levy on all damages won in civil cases. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) made the point persuasively in the Committee's questioning. Most civil claims end in success or at any rate end in one party receiving a substantial amount in damages. The levy could be used to relieve the burden on the legal aid fund. Such a scheme was set up in Hong Kong in 1984 and became self-financing after four years.

Fourthly, more use could be made of private legal insurance taken out by employers on behalf of employees similar to BUPA in medicine, the AA and RAC schemes and the Legal Protection Group, which is part of Sun Alliance. The more that such insurance was taken out, the less burden there would be on state legal aid.

Fifthly, we could deliver a cheaper legal service in some cases by having salaried lawyers working from law centres where there is an inadequacy of private solicitors in a particular area. I understand how small solicitors feel about that. Obviously, they should not be threatened. However, there are plenty of parts of the country,

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

especially following the Government's reforms of the professions, where there is simply no solicitor. The salaried service operating from law centres would obviously be sensible.

Sixthly, the Government are actively considering the franchising of legal advice as a contract between the Legal Aid Board and the franchisee, for block advice in a large number of cases at an all-in fee. That seems sensible.

Seventhly, we could resolve disputes, especially in matrimonial matters, without the need for confrontational legal appearances in court. Relate has recommended that system and achieved some success in it.

Eighthly, we could do more to expand the use of the small claims courts, where legal expenses are minimal and rough justice—not always so rough—is often, if not frequently, obtained.

I could go on. The field of possible legal reform is large. As the Select Committee reported, this corner—the financing of the law—is particularly fertile. Let us all—the politicians, the Lord Chancellor, his Department, the legal professions and the courts administration, judges included—seek to improve the system. The system can be improved. There is a large area in which those improvements could take place.

I finish by quoting the last paragraph of our report on page xxvii. It says:

"Our inquiry has demonstrated that unless the whole legal aid system is fully reviewed and all the relevant parties act together and constructively in undertaking that review, cuts will continue to be forced on governments. The principal sufferer will then inevitably be the one person everyone seeks to help—the person of modest means with a legitimate case, who seeks the protection of the law."

5.18 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I am grateful to you for calling me so early in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I intend to be brief, and I declare an interest as a practising lawyer. I served on the Select Committee which drew up the report. The cuts—I use the word "cuts"—in the number of people who will be eligible for legal aid were perhaps untimely. There are ways in which the matter could have been put off to enable people to examine the system. It occurred to me when the evidence was being taken, as it did to many members of the Committee, that one simple way of reducing the cost would be not to pay VAT on legal aid payments. The Government should not pay it out simply to get it back six weeks later. It is a waste of money. It causes bureaucracy. It costs money. It is waste.

There are various other matters. For example, the Lord Chancellor's Department did not appear to have taken into account the fact that the number of people charged in police stations during the last quarter of last year fell by some 12 per cent. Indeed, as the newspapers have reported, the number of reportable crimes has also fallen by 4 per cent. Therefore, there will be a reduction in the volume of cases going through the courts. Even now, court rooms are standing empty in major magistrates courts and legal aid certificates are not being granted because there are not the cases for them.

Criminal legal aid forms by far the largest proportion of the legal aid bill. As the number of cases is decreasing, the amount being paid out in legal aid in 1992-93 will also decrease.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, in the fairly typical metropolitan jurisdiction of Solihull, from where I come, there is already clear evidence that completions of caseload in January 1993 are up on January 1992? Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's comparison of last quarters could be deceptive. Incidentally, I attach no more importance to my statistic than I do to his; I measure it with the same caution as I would the last quarters.

Mr. Bermingham: It appears that Solihull is a criminal place. The evidence from north London, Merseyside and elsewhere throughout the country goes the other way—but time will tell. The point is that it is the sort of factor that has never been studied. Indeed, we have never studied in depth the way in which legal aid is administered and where spending occurs. We all have anecdotes; I could keep the House up all night with them, but I do not intend to do that. It would serve no purpose, because there is no hard evidence. That will come only from a detailed and efficient inquiry into these matters. Therefore, my first request to the Minister is that such an inquiry be put in hand urgently.

In my experience of criminal legal aid, I have never understood why it is necessary to wait until the last possible moment to find out whether somebody has pleaded guilty or not guilty in what is a standard case. There are enormous savings to be made in that and other areas. For example, in a magistrates court, it is often to the advantage of a defendant to plead early, if he intends to plead. Very often, a good duty solicitor can assess within the first few hours whether in a simple case—I am not talking about complicated cases—there is to be a plea. If there is, the matter should be dealt with on the spot.

Unfortunately, there has been a slight complication because of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which has led to some sentencing problems. That has increased the cost of legal aid. However, with good will on all sides we could rectify the mistakes in the Act. I do not think that there is a lawyer in the country who would say that the Act is anything other than flawed.

It is wrong that the overall effect of the proposals is to attack civil legal aid. Criminal legal aid will emerge largely unscathed—although there may be a little more difficulty in getting expert witnesses and so on—while the real cut will be in eligibility for civil legal aid. I made similar points in Committee, and they are in the report. Some 92 per cent. of personal injury cases succeed, with recovery running at about £2 million a week in lost benefits, with the likelihood that that figure will rise. That is money going back to the state.

The overall cost of accident claims last year was a paltry £11 million. That is nothing. However, the proposals will affect a number of people—I will not play the numbers game—who will no longer be able to go to a lawyer and get legal aid to bring an accident claim. Of course, if that person was either a passenger in a car or had been knocked down, he would still be covered: many lawyers do not even bother to apply for legal aid for such cases, because their costs following the event are assured.

I met a number of solicitors in St. Helens last Saturday and discussed the issues with them. They were worried that the cases that would be most affected would be those with claims of about £1,000 or £2,000. The people who will

suffer under the eligibility cuts are the very people who want to bring such claims. They will be very much under attack.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): No doubt the hon. Gentleman is aware that there is speculation that the arbitration system in the small claims court may be extended upwards to cover the claims to which he has referred. Does he have any observations on that?

Mr. Bermingham: I have only one brief observation. A solicitor that I met in St. Helens on Saturday, who is not of my political persuasion, said that that would close his litigation department. He said that, once those claims were taken away from him, his litigation department could not survive, because it does not attract the big claims. We must remember that many solicitors in rural areas and small towns rely for their livelihoods—and they are not the world's richest—on such claims, where they win their costs. In the end, there is no real cost to the taxpayer.

My cri de coeur to the Minister is that two groups will suffer most from what is being proposed—first, battered wives and other victims of violence; secondly, children. Those are the two groups where the greatest damage will be done. I hope that, for once, the House will put politics aside and think of human beings and the victims of abuse, domestic violence, car accidents, work accidents and so on. Let us all stand back, albeit for a few months, while we thoroughly investigate these matters and find where the savings can be made—and both professional bodies acknowledge that there are savings to be made within the system. Let us deny these regulations today; they can always be brought back before us after the inquiry, if they are justified.

I have a sneaking feeling that, once we begin to nibble away at eligibility, it will be nibbled and gone for ever. I ask the House and the Minister to think of the 100,000 or 125,000 people who will suffer. That is an incredible number. How much human misery is there in that figure? For once, let us not be partisan. We should stand back, gather the evidence and then act with realism and decision. I happen to believe that we could increase the net for legal aid without it costing any more money. That would bring a little more civilisation to many more people.

5.27 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): My speech folows those of two colleagues who, like me, are members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs—my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham).

Members of the Committee reached unanimous agreement on certain points. First, however we felt about the emotional aspects of legal aid, we were all appalled by the soaring cost. Legal aid has seen the biggest increase in the whole of the public sector during the past few years, and we cannot go on like that.

The most important discovery during our deliberations was the enormously fertile area in which we can look for ways to make savings. We have heard many suggestions about that. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton made a point about VAT, which was taken up by the hon. Member for St. Helens, South. We cannot quantify it, because we have not done sufficient work yet.

It might also be worth considering the difference between the remuneration of barristers and the remuneration of solicitors. The Committee was told that there was a great scope for savings in barristers' remuneration. For example, if one counsel were used instead of two in a big criminal case, important savings could be made.

The figures surprised us very much. We were told that, for instance, a barrister acting in a child law case would receive £300 an hour for reading papers, and £2,000 a day in refreshers. A while ago, the Director of Public Prosecutions told us that her average brief fee payment to a Queen's counsel for a trial lasting the average length of 2·6 days was £7,585. Those are bizarre sums—and, moreover, the fees are paid on legal aid.

Mr. Lawrence: They are not. Such sums simply are not paid on legal aid.

Dame Jill Knight: On page 11 of the report by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, we find the question:

"Are those fees paid on legal aid?"

The answer was:

"Yes".

Perhaps the position should be clarified, but in any event—regardless of whether legal aid is involved—an enormous amount of money is being spent.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Is not the crux of the matter the fact that we have no facts and figures apart from those in the Select Committee report? Moreover, it is clear that there is a dispute among members of the Committee about whether such fees are paid.

Dame Jill Knight: I agree. As the Chairman of the Committee has pointed out, we were not trying to decide where savings could be made; the points to which I have referred simply arose as we went along.

In what I assure hon. Members will be a short speech, I wish to deal with the Legal Aid Board from a rather different angle. Its activities concern me very much. If a Member of Parliament has reason to question the allocation of legal aid, he had better understand that the board will deal with his inquiry with all the courtesy, helpfulness and understanding of a thug with a leaded sock. In cases brought to me, legal aid has been granted to would-be litigants with ample resources: indeed, that point was raised in an intervention. One such litigant had four cars, and lived very well in an extremely pleasant and expensive house.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): Everyone has four cars.

Dame Jill Knight: I assure my hon. Friend that I have only one. However, I am not applying for legal aid.

The parties against whom that constituent wished to act—this was not a criminal matter, but a neighbourhood dispute involving planning—were astounded to find themselves being taken to court. They lived next door to my constituent, and saw the style in which he lived: they saw unmistakable signs of affluence. Nevertheless, the grant was provided, enabling that man almost to ruin the people against whom he was acting. It was they, of course, who complained to me.

I felt that legal aid should not have been granted in that case. I wrote to the Lord Chancellor's Department, which—in the time-honoured manner of Government

[Dame Jill Knight]

Departments—handed me on to another Department, or at least said that I had better write to the Legal Aid Board. I did so.

I believe that I had a perfect right to question the board about its decision. Public money was being used. I did not want to be given confidential facts about the case; I simply wanted to know that the full facts of the matter—which had been reported to me, and on which I had reported to the Legal Aid Board—had been properly considered. I felt that I had a right to a proper answer. I feel very strongly that all Members of Parliament have not merely a right but a duty to pursue what they consider to be genuine complaints.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): My hon. Friend is making a persuasive case, to which I have listened with interest. Is she aware that, in certain cases, it might be possible to refer such queries to the Parliamentary Commissioner, who would be only too pleased to pursue them in more detail and at greater length? My hon. Friend may agree with my view that the Commissioner's office is under-used by the House. In this regard, he could be the right arm of Members of Parliament.

Dame Jill Knight: I shall consider that helpful suggestion carefully.

It seems sensible to me for someone who queries what the Legal Aid Board is doing to go straight to the board itself. I did that: I wrote a courteous letter, giving the facts as I knew them. The answer I received was rude, dismissive and completely uninformative. It was a "Yes, Minister" version of: "Go to hell: we do what we want, and no one is allowed to question us." That will not do. Surely Members of Parliament form the only body that can question the Legal Aid Board; I know of no other organisation that can say to the board, "Are you sure you are absolutely right?" It appears, however, that no one has the right to expect a courteous and informative answer from the board.

Let me ask my hon. Friend a direct question: will he please examine this matter? It concerns not only me, but other hon. Members who have raised similar cases with the Legal Aid Board and have tried to persuade it to behave in a civilised and helpful manner.

5.36 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I do not often agree with the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), although we have a long history of debating matters such as this. It goes back to the days when we sat our Bar exams together. However, I sympathised with a good deal of his speech, especially his positive suggestions for getting to the root of the problem of the rising cost of legal aid. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) wishes to intervene, he will take up a little of my time; if he does not, perhaps he will kindly refrain from gesticulating in a manner which suggests that he does.

The proposals that we are discussing will be extremely damaging to the rights of ordinary people. I shall not engage in an argument about the precise number who will be hit; even the Government have acknowledged that more than 120,000 people in England and Wales will drop out of legal aid altogether. The Law Society of England and Wales properly drew attention to the much larger penumbra who will have to make contributions. No one has attempted to deny that the society was probably right in saying that as many as 12 million families could be affected by the Government's proposals.

Mr. Butler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: Madam Speaker has asked for short speeches. As I do not intend to speak for long, I should prefer not to give way. Mine will be the only Liberal contribution to this brief three-hour debate.

The Law Society of Scotland has also produced some figures, which no one has seriously contested, about the damage that the proposals will do. I find the lumping together of debates on the English and Scottish arrangements unacceptable; the two subjects are entirely distinct and require distinct solutions. There must be a proper review of the Scottish criminal justice system, not just the administration of legal aid in Scotland.

One significant difference between the Scottish and English and Welsh systems is that, although rising, the average cost of a case in Scottish courts is a little over half that in English and Welsh courts. It is perverse of the Scottish Office to beat the people of Scotland with the same stick as is being used in England and, on the coat tails of the Lord Chancellor, to impose cuts which are not necessary even judged purely in terms of public expenditure costs in Scotland. Indeed, the Government have predicted a long-term decline in the demand for legal aid in Scotland due to demographic changes.

Perhaps the most serious aspect of the debate is not the hardship that these measures will create, appalling though it may be—hon. Members have said that family law cases are most likely to involve serious hardship—but that the measures will not even address the problem that they are apparently designed to address. On 3 February, in evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, of which I have the honour to belong, the Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department told us that these measures will not reduce expenditure on legal aid but will merely restrain it—and only slightly at that. In other words, we are being asked to swallow something that will not tackle the problem that the Lord Chancellor's Department has identified. We have not had from the Lord Chancellor's Department, and certainly not from the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, any evidence about how it is proposed effectively to tackle the problem of the spiralling costs of legal aid. We were told that the measures will not be terribly damaging to the interests of those whose eligibility has been reduced—the Department focused on that point—but the debate should address the question of how to get at the root problem.

The rights that these measures are interfering with are of no use unless they can be exercised, and liberties are of no value unless they can be protected. The purpose of the law is to ensure that our rights and liberties are protected. If a person cannot pursue his legal rights in court or defend himself against attack, those rights and liberties do not exist and, in a real sense, the Government's proposals contribute to the creation of a lawless society.

There is no doubt that the rising cost of legal aid is a challenge to everyone who cares about access to justice and that, unchecked, there would have to be a substantial further injection of cash to provide an adequate service

from the existing system, but I draw the House's attention to comments that the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Justice Taylor, made in another place in an earlier debate on the subject. He said:

"Experience shows that so far from saving overall costs by denying legal aid, costs may be incurred which legal aid may have avoided. There are many cases in which a litigant in person ploughs on when legal advice would have persuaded him that he had no case. He is likely to take more of the court's time partly because he may have difficulty in presenting his case intelligently and partly because the court needs to be more indulgent to him . . . The Master of the Rolls tells me that already about 20 per cent. of the sitting time in the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) is taken up by litigants in person."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 3 February 1993; Vol. 542, c. 282-3.]

In short, if economies are to be made which do not result in the denial of justice, there is little choice but to look seriously at the system of courts, advice and assistance. In so far as there is a royal commission sitting on the criminal justice system, it might be argued that no serious amendments of the kind being considered today should have been introduced before the report of the royal commission, which no doubt will have relevant comments to make on procedure and evidence.

I therefore—in no sense comprehensively—conclude my remarks by offering a few suggestions which are worthy of consideration as to how we might seek better to address the problem of how to spend the money that we have, rather than simply cutting to save money. First, the Government should consider the possibility of taking a firm step on the road towards a more comprehensive system of alternative dispute resolution than is currently offered. Demand on the courts could be reduced by diverting cases to tribunals and hearings, whose decisions could be made binding. Secondly, we should extend the requirement for compulsory insurance into areas where it is appropriate to do so, which could reduce the need of many to go to court, as it has in employment, personal injury and traffic accident cases.

Thirdly, we should consider extending the role of the ombudsman, encouraging trade associations to set up their own ombudsman for each industry as an alternative and cheaper means of satisfactorily resolving disputes outside the courtroom. Fourthly, we should consider introducing wider use of plea bargaining. A guilty plea would result in a lower sentence, less time in court and lower cost. Justice must still be done and innocents must be protected from pressures to plead guilty. The Seabrook model provides a starting point for such a system, but not a perfect one. Fifthly, we should consider wider use of judges' summonses for directions in criminal cases. This allows the judge to manage the progress of the trial by calling for documents at specific times, thus facilitating a speedier, and therefore cheaper, procedure.

We must also recognise the extent to which weak cases constitute an expensive and unnecessary burden on the courts. The Bar Council has recommended that the merits test of the Legal Aid Act 1988 should be tightened to provide a workable and sufficiently realistic equivalent to the pressures and choices imposed on private litigants.

We must find a more efficient and comprehensive means of providing advice and representation. I note, with approval, the proposal of the chairman of the Bar Council that every barrister might be asked to undertake at least one free case each year—pro bono publico. That is the kind of gesture which could make quite a significant impact on costs. The Lord Chancellor has signalled his desire to introduce franchising and fixed fees, against many objections by the legal profession that neither of the proposals would have beneficial effects. If the Government press ahead with their proposals, I foresee that they will simply deprive large parts of the country of the benefits of legal advice from solicitors, who will close down their operations. That is entirely the wrong track to take.

Mr. David Nicholson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I said that I would not give way, but as I have particular regard for the hon. Gentleman I will give way briefly.

Mr. Nicholson: I am most grateful. As a fellow member of the Public Accounts Committee, and also as a member of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee, I am following the hon. Gentleman's proposals with great interest and considerable approval. They are alternative ways of resolving a genuine problem. I have not yet heard him mention what role the Child Support Agency may have in moving into administrative procedures matters, which are currently resolved in the courts at great length and often unsatisfactorily.

Mr. Maclennan: That is one of the proposals to which the Government should give serious and constructive consideration.

I was about to mention the provision of advice through law centres. The funding and proper provision of law centres can be enormously helpful in creating an efficient, effective and accessible source of help, which can substantially reduce the costs of legal aid. However, local authorities across the country are finding it increasingly difficult to fund them, and 10 have closed in the past few years.

There could be tremendous savings if such organisations were properly funded. I acknowledge that it is difficult to give a precise estimate of their economic value, but their important scope and worth has long been recognised. As long ago as 1979, the royal commission on legal services concluded that their impact had been "out of all proportion to their size".

I draw to the Minister's attention the fact that a large amount of work is pre-empted—for example, in the case of groups of tenants of housing estates. In such instances, their work can prevent expenditure.

I cite an example from, I believe, the constituency of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). The Brent law centre represented 2,350 council tenants as a single group against the local authority. Had the cases been dealt with by a private practice, each of the 2,350 litigants would have had to be represented individually. In the future, law centres could offer still further scope for innovative and efficient means of delivering local services. For example, they are in an ideal position to provide a duty solicitor scheme in county courts for cases where representation is crucial, paid on a sessional basis.

We must examine the administration of the courts themselves. Delays in courts and the problems created by non-attendance are expensive. In 1991, the National Audit Office survey, which was conducted before the sitting of the Public Accounts Committee, found that 66 per cent. of clients had experienced delays in the handling of their case but the true causes of such delays are apparently unknown to the Lord Chancellor's Department. The technology that the Department says may help it to monitor such problems

[Mr. Maclennan]

will not be in place until later this year, despite the fact that the Public Accounts Committee recommended that it should be set up as long ago as 1986. It is clear from the National Audit Office survey that many court administrative practices are inefficient and inappropriate to the volume and complexity of today's cases.

I have suggested a substantial package of reforms which is illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is clear that we cannot continue year after year to try to shore up our crumbling system of legal aid by further cuts in eligibility. It is entirely misleading for the Government to suggest that the only people who will be adversely affected by what the Government are doing are those who are dropping out of legal aid. It is the people on low incomes, just above the income support level, who will be most adversely affected.

I believe that the measures should be withdrawn. They should not be implemented on 12 April as intended, and no measures should be brought before the House to cut eligibility for legal aid unless and until the Government are able to diagnose why legal aid costs are spiralling in some parts of the system and what steps they can and will take to reduce the unacceptable increases in costs. Such proposals must be more pertinent than those before us. The reform of our faulty system is necessary and urgent.

5.54 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Thank you for calling me at this time, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall also endeavour to be as brief as I can. I had planned to make a three-hour or four-hour speech until your earlier admonition. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has, as ever, made a thoughtful contribution to our proceedings, and I am sure that he will have been listened to with great care.

Before coming to the guts of my speech, may I attempt to clear up an apparent confusion in the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)? She mentioned some enormous figures for the daily rates for counsel for reading papers and so on. Page 11 of the minutes of evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs contains an exchange between the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and Mr. Birts QC, one of the barristers who gave evidence. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South said:

> "It has been put to us, for example, that a barrister in a child law case would receive £300 per hour for reading papers and £2,000 a day as refreshers. The Director of Public Prosecutions said to us a while ago that her average payment brief fee to a QC for an average 2·6 day trial was £7,585. I have to put it to you that these are bizarre sums of money to those of us who are not lawyers."

Mr. Birts said:

> "Are those fees paid on legal aid?"

One can imagine the inflection in his voice as he asked that question. The hon. Gentleman said, "Yes." Mr. Birts continued:

> "I think it is important to know that and to know whether they have been through the taxation process or the assessment process. Are they taxation figures or not?"

It is likely that that question was based on a false premise or that there was a misunderstanding about the evidence that the DPP had given to the Committee on another matter.

What is more telling is that a little later, in paragraph 67 on page 12, the hon. Member for Sunderland, South wanted to know what was

> "the average payment in a criminal case per hour, first of all, and then what is the average refresher?"

Mr. Calvert-Smith, a junior from the Bar, answered:

> "The base figure is £29 an hour. That is the base figure upon which 86 per cent. of all criminal cases are paid because they are standard fee cases."

The hon. Member for Sunderland, South replied:

> "You amaze me, I must say."

Mr. Calvert-Smith said:

> "I am sorry, it is true."

The hon. Gentleman then asked:

> "You are telling us—let us be clear—that the average barrister charges £29 an hour?"

Mr. Calvert-Smith replied:

> "We do not charge the legal aid system in 86 per cent. of cases. We are sent a brief which says "Standard fee" on it. We know exactly to the last pound and shilling what we are going to get paid, and we know that that has been based on the figure of £29 an hour prep."—

preparation—

> "as average in all standard cases, so that is the base figure. That is what the Lord Chancellor thinks that he is paying as an average fee to 86 per cent. of criminal practitioners."

I hope that that has cleared up some of the confusion which arose unwittingly in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston.

I start with one or two givens, which I am sure will be accepted by all hon. Members. The legal aid system was one of the great legal reforms of the century. Its introduction into our system of legal affairs just after the second world war was a benchmark. It was the intention of the Rushcliffe report, after which the system was established, that no one should be

> "financially unable to prosecute a just and reasonable claim or defend a legal right."

That principle has been reasserted throughout the decades since 1949 and was endorsed in other words by the Lord Chancellor. He told the Home Affairs Select Committee:

> "The legal aid scheme exists to ensure that ordinary people can have the protection of the law. It is the legal aid scheme which gives many people access to the law, and underpins justice and the freedom of the individual."

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman quote what the Lord Chancellor told the Home Affairs Select Committee of which I, too, am a member. How does he reconcile that with what the Lord Chancellor said in 1990:

> "What we need to debate in the 1990s is the need to secure better access for those whose means exclude them from the legal aid scheme but are not sufficient to pursue cases through the courts"?

Do not the Lord Chancellor's present proposals run totally contrary to that, and to what the hon. Gentleman has just quoted?

Mr. Garnier: I am sure that the hon. Lady will have a chance to make a contribution in due course, and I believe that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland has already dealt with that question. There will always be a cut-off point; some people will always be on the wrong side of the boundary, and a humane society must seek to mitigate the effects of that as far as possible.

We must bear in mind the fact that it is estimated that, by the financial year 1995, we shall be talking about a legal aid budget of £1·5 billion in cash terms. That is a lot of money, even in the language of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). A substantial

proportion of the gross cost of some aspects of the legal aid budget is recovered—especially in cases such as personal injury. However, it has to be faced, whether we like it or not, that net costs have risen at well above the rate of inflation.

Perhaps I should make the declaration that I too am a member of the Bar, although, as I have probably done no more than four legal aid cases in 15 or 16 years at the Bar —I specialise entirely in defamation work, which is one of the exceptions to the legal aid provisions—I may be able to talk with some disinterest——

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Being privately funded.

Mr. Garnier: Labour Members may think that I am one of the fat cats of the privately funded Bar, but I too was open-mouthed and most impressed by the figures presented by the hon. Member for Sunderland, South in his questioning of Mr. Birts. No one in my chambers would look askance at those fees.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: May I vouch for the moderation of my hon. Friend's fees?

Mr. Nicholls: They are all lawyers on that Committee.

Dame Jill Knight: No, they are not.

Mr. Garnier: They are not. My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston and the hon. Member for Sunderland, South are not lawyers; nor is my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). All three of them have played a great part in our deliberations and have been most helpful to all of us.

Little research has been done into why the costs are rising at such a rate. Some limited research has been carried out by the Legal Aid Board, and the National Audit Office has reported on its behalf. The report shows a substantial rise in the numbers of letters written and telephone calls made per case, and so forth, but no single explanation is given.

Nor were the legal professions able to give us an in-depth analysis of the reasons for the growth in costs. Witnesses recognised a number of factors that might have been causes of the massive and increasing rise in costs. In civil cases, there are the effects of the Children Act and the growth of judicial review. Witnesses also identified an increased awareness of litigation and of legal rights, which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), our Chairman, has already mentioned.

Other witnesses mentioned administrative failures in the legal system, including listing inefficiencies and adjournments in the magistrates courts. My experience in the Queen's Bench division of the High Court and in the civil jury list is that efficiencies have been manifest, and libel actions and civil jury actions set down come on for trial within 29 days after setting down, rather than the two-year wait on which we often used to rely some time ago.

Sir Michael Davies, the judge in charge of the jury list, and his successor in that office, Mr. Justice Drake, have done tremendous work to increase efficiencies. The need for efficiencies has been recognised and the efforts are bearing fruit, especially in the division in which I practise. With proper training of listing officers and the proper use of computers, and good will both from the administration and from practitioners, there is no reason why further improvements could not be made in other courts, especially the criminal courts.

For reasons of time, I shall not detail all the factors that witnesses identified to the Committee as being responsible for the immense rate of increase in the cost of legal aid. Suffice it to say that that cost has effectively doubled as a proportion of Government expenditure. No Government, regardless of the economic circumstances that we are presently in but are shortly to come out of, could allow increased expenditure at that rate without some check upon it.

The Committee unanimously agreed that a full and detailed analysis of the reasons for the rise in demand for legal aid, and for the increase in costs per case, must be undertaken. I differ from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), who said that the inquiry should take place before today's regulations came into effect. In my suggestion—I almost said "in my submission"—the regulations which, assuming a fair wind this evening, will come into force on 11 April, will act as a catalyst and encourage debate about that aspect of Government expenditure.

The Lord Chancellor told us in his evidence:

"if current rates of growth were allowed to continue, expenditure on legal aid would be likely to be close to £2 billion by 1995-96".

That would represent an exact doubling of the proportion of public expenditure devoted to legal aid in 1987-88.

Now I shall mention some of our suggestions about how savings could be increased. We concluded in our report:

"The savings forecast will be made under the legal aid head of the Lord Chancellor's budget. It is a notorious problem of public expenditure planning that savings in one area may result in costs in another, without any mechanism for properly judging those costs and taking them into account in the equation."

Clearly the Lord Chancellor had views on the matter, as did those who gave evidence to the Committee and supplied evidence in written form.

In my private conversations with members of the judiciary, especially members of the Court of Appeal, the question of the added costs to the system of administering justice brought about by an increase in the number of unprepared or incompetent—I use that term strictly—litigants in person clogging up the system, especially in the Court of Appeal, is frequently raised. For example, the Registrar of the Court of Appeal now has five legal civil servants working for him, employed more or less full time in trying to untangle the propositions advanced by litigants in person who wish to apply to that court. I suggest that there are better uses of those civil servants' time than seeking to read the green ink—hon. Members on both sides of the House will no doubt recognise the green ink syndrome. It seems an utter waste of the intellect and time of Court of Appeal judges and of the registrar's civil servants that they should have to wade through all that before being able to reach a judicial conclusion. But identifying that problem does not mean that we can sit back and say, "More money, more money", irrespective of whether that money is being wisely spent.

Others suggested that people would bring cases at first instance which lacked merit, by virtue of their not having been given legal aid. Under order 18, rule 19, of the rules of the Supreme Court—I am sure that an equivalent

[Mr. Garnier]

procedure is available in the county courts—there is a method by which cases can be struck out summarily if they want merit. I do not see why litigants in person should be treated differently from represented litigants. If their cases lack merit, they should be snuffed out at birth.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): They are.

Mr. Garnier: I am told that they are. All the better for that.

Mr. Anderson: When I said that they are, I mean that it is my understanding that judges lean over backwards, understandably, to help the litigant in person. That will clearly be a further cog in the machine and another matter on the side of the equation to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Garnier: I acknowledge the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but I should like to move on.

We must consider how we are to save money in the longer term as well as identifying the need to save money and deal with the problem as it is currently presented to us. The first area in which we in the Committee believe that savings can be made is in the administration of the present legal aid system. The matter was the subject of a recent report from the National Audit Office and has been the subject of hearings of the Public Accounts Committee, which will, I believe, shortly produce a report by which we will no doubt be informed. But that should not prevent us at this stage from doing our best and taking steps to check the unmitigated flow of money into the legal aid system without its being properly accounted for.

It is not just the mechanics of the present system that may need scrutiny. Others have talked about the need to look at the planning and overall strategy of the legal aid system since its inception in 1949. The furore that the Lord Chancellor's proposals have engendered may act as a catalyst to allow a more fundamental and strategic look at the purposes of legal aid and at the best means of delivering service to the consumer.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton has outlined a number of the alternatives that might be available—alternative legal disputes settlements and so forth. I would just caution the House about being too easily seduced by short-cut judicial remedies, because hasty court work is often not conducive to bringing justice into the world. There are a lot of criticisms to be made of the "no win, no fee" system. It simply does not apply sensibly to cases where injunctive relief or other equitable relief is being sought, and that is very often the case in legal aid matrimonial cases.

We all accept the need to find value for money, but I would suggest that we start that now rather than allowing the debate to rumble on without a proper date being put on it.

In his evidence to us, the Lord Chancellor has made it quite clear that he has an open mind——

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Garnier: I am conscious of the time, and I really must push on.

Mr. Llwyd *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that, if the Member who has the Floor does not give way, he must resume his seat.

While I am on my feet, may I remind the hon. Member that there are no bonus points for Members who make long speeches when the Chair has requested short ones?

Mr. Garnier: That was exactly the admonition I had in mind in not giving way. I do not wish to be unkind, but I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

All interested parties are now in a frame of mind where they are prepared to meet and, I would suggest, discuss constructively how best to achieve the common aim of us all, ensuring the best delivery of justice to the public. This set of regulations is just the beginning of assisting to that end. I commend the regulations to the House as but the beginning of the process.

6.13 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): If there is anything that I am famous for, it is the brevity of my speeches. I am not sure about the quality.

First of all, on behalf of Scotland and England and Wales, I protest at the fact that we have squeezed these two debates into one, in a time which is totally insufficient to begin to discuss the seriousness of these affairs. Only two weeks ago, we managed to get two separate debates on the late opening of betting shops in England and Wales and in Scotland, and, important as that subject may be, it pales into insignificance beside the importance of what is happening here. It is a disgrace, and it also confuses the issue. The Minister constantly moved back and forth between England and Wales and Scotland, yet it is impossible, because the two systems are not comparable. Because of that, there will be a lot more confusion of those who are listening to the debate elsewhere.

Before I am accused of being some sort of ethnic cleanser, I want to point out that I do not distance myself from the business of England and Wales and Ireland in this matter, because the justice which ought to prevail for everyone is equal in all those areas of the United Kingdom. I am an internationalist, not a nationalist, particularly where justice is concerned.

I notice with great interest that the Select Committee on Home Affairs spent a great deal of time discussing the reasons for the increase. That was understandable, although the Committee did not have the extended time that it would have needed to go into all the ramifications of trying to put that right. But my recollection, if it is correct, is that there was very little discussion of the recession as a contributory factor. This was in contrast to the 1991 annual report of the Scottish Legal Aid Board, which observed:

"it seems likely that the recession has been a significant contributory factor"

in the growth in demand for civil legal aid and an

"exceptionally high and unexpected rise"

in the volume of accounts received by the board. At that time, it was indicating, at least to the Government, that, as regards Scotland, an increase was on its way. The Government had plenty of time to look at the reasons for the increase because they were given the warning then.

However, as far as I can gather, the most significant cause of the increase in the cost of legal aid in England and Wales identified by the Lord Chancellor—the rise in the average cost per case—appears not to be a factor in

Scotland. In fact, the average cost per case in Scotland was £815. I realise that it is unfair to compare the two costs because of different systems; nevertheless, in England and Wales it was £2,008 per case. Therefore, the Chancellor, having noticed the spiralling costs in England, had a knee-jerk reaction, Treasury-led, which fed through to Scotland. As was said earlier, we were hanging on the coat-tails of the action that had to be taken immediately here in England because of the spiralling costs.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): On that point of the cost, my hon. Friend will have heard the Minister say that the cost of civil legal aid had almost doubled in the past five years. Does he recall that, at last week's meeting of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, Mr. Brian Adair, president of the Law Society of Scotland, refuted that saying there had been no increase in real terms, and that it was only over the past year. He described the increase as a blip, and said that it was due to a number of factors, including the fact that solicitors are submitting their accounts faster because of the recession.

Is it not a fact that there is no demand for this review of legal aid in Scotland, and that we are just being tagged on the back of the English and Welsh review, for reasons which suit the Government but do not suit the people or the legal profession in Scotland?

Mr. McKelvey: That is indeed the case, but if there is —as there ought to be—an immediate investigation of legal aid costs in England and Wales, I would not object to a subsequent investigation into the costs of legal aid in Scotland, because, if there is any waste of money by virtue of the system, such money could be put to a proper use by making legal aid available to a larger number of people rather than a smaller number, as will happen under these regulations.

I cannot give evidence, because there has not been an investigation to provide it, but from a gut reaction and from my own personl experience as a constituency Member of the people who come to me seeking advice, I feel that there is no question but that the recession, with greater unemployment, has led to more domestic separations and violence, and more problems caused by the lack of jobs or money. It must have had an effect on people who seek legal aid, and it is those very people that we are going to bar.

I do not want to get involved in the numbers game, but if there is one person, one family, one group, who will be denied legal aid and yet who deserve it in all justice, there is something wrong with this process that we are going through today. Several groups of people have written to us —Family Law, the citizens' advice bureaux, Glasgow Women's Aid, the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, the Scottish Association for Mental Health, the Law Society —and a common thread runs through their letters. They have made out a case not for themselves but for those who, they say, will suffer because of this legislation, and they are not just the poorest and neediest but include even those on moderate incomes. Are the Government seeking to turn this legislation into an extension of the benefits system? I suspect that they are. I object to that, and I support the objections from various groups.

Family law cases account for the majority of expenditure in civil legal aid cases and for half the expenditure in advice and assistance. It follows that any reduction in eligibility would have a major impact on that area of law. The majority of initiators of family proceedings are women. The nature of the eligibility criteria for civil legal aid are such that only the woman's income is assessed, and the husband's is discounted. As women are traditionally responsible for child care, they are often in part-time employment to fit in with their child care obligations. Women are also traditionally at the lower end of the earnings scale. Any reduction in eligibility for civil aid will disproportionately affect women across a broad spectrum. I am not saying that there are not men in that position; of course there are. However, proportionately it is women who will bear the brunt of the cuts.

Glasgow Women's Aid says:

> "Abuse of women takes place in every sector of society; both rich and poor men are abusive, and regardless of the financial situation within the family few women have control over the financial resources."

That is not a guess, but a fact. Women in Scotland will bear the brunt of the suggested cuts.

Although the Government announced on 17 February revisions to their proposals to change the legal aid system in Scotland, there remains concern that individuals' access to justice is under serious threat. The Scottish Council for Civil Liberties says of the legal aid system:

> "This is an important right which has been recognised by many international treaties and courts and cannot be discarded lightly."

If the Government are modern, democratic and caring —they say that they pursue policies of charters for people: charters for patients, charters for pupils and charters for pupils' parents—they cannot turn their back on the basis on which the interests of people are looked after—the question of human rights.

The universal declaration of human rights, which has been adopted by 48 states of the United Nations General Assembly, says in article 7:

> "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law".

The people of Scotland, of England, of Northern Ireland and of Wales are entitled to that equality, and are entitled not to be discriminated against. They should not be concerned, as they are at the moment, about what will happen to them after today's debate.

The Scottish Association for Mental Health has outlined two important areas which we should consider: civil legal aid and mental health hearings. If the proposed changes to civil legal aid take place, people with disabilities might have to face large bills for legal fees if they were involved in court proceedings. Among the proceedings covered by the rules would be a hearing to determine whether a person should be detained in hospital under section 18 of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984.

Among the people who might be affected by the changes are those on invalidity benefit. A person who was unable to work because of mental health problems could be entitled to invalidity benefit if he or she had paid the appropriate contributions. The benefits range from £54·15 for older people to £65·70 for a disabled person who is under 40. A person in the first category would have to pay £200 towards the cost of a mental health hearing, whereas the younger person's contribution would be £300·85. To pay such a sum out of such an income would be unthinkable for a normal person. It is intolerable that we should consider imposing such a burden on a person suffering the stress and strain of mental disability.

The effects of the cuts on people with disabilities are similar. They receive extra income only because the

[Mr. McKelvey]

benefits system recognises the extra living costs that are associated with disability. If we take the approach that we should penalise that group of people, how on earth can we be considered humane, modern, democratic or caring? It is because those concerns are shared by the disability movement in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland that we are grateful that the submissions of disability organisations should be circulated in the House today. Declarations made by hon. Members about those groups of people will be recorded and read, and should be acted on by the Government.

I have no overall solution to the problem of the growing cost of legal aid. The matter has never been investigated properly. However, I have one direct suggestion for the Minister. He should withdraw the motions and have a proper inquiry into the whole question not only of legal aid, both civil and criminal, but of the judicial system and its costs. I do not know why it is so much more costly to defend cases in England than in Scotland. The comparisons are worth making. If the Minister cannot do that, my advice to his hon. Friends, who I believe are genuinely concerned about the issue and about the groups of people who will be affected, is at least to abstain tonight, if they cannot join us in the Lobby to defeat the Government.

6.26 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I listened with considerable interest to the speech made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). It was an especially thoughtful speech and I congratulate him on it. I was interested in his passing reference to the ombudsman and I believe that he was right to make that reference. I believe, as I am sure other hon. Members agree, that the ombudsman has a part to play in this area. I find it significant that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson), who is sitting in his usual place in the Chamber, played a prominent part this morning in the activities of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, which discussed the ombudsman. Mr. William Reed could do much to assist the House on matters relating not only to the health service, but to a wide range of other issues, such as the Legal Aid Board.

In considering the future of legal aid, it is necessary first to look at the nation's economic position. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear in his Budget statement that we face a deficit of £35 billion this year, which will rise to £50 billion next year. We all know that the reason is a major recession and we all know that recessions squeeze Government revenues both ways. They reduce the amount coming in and they increase the amount spent on benefits. Given that position, it is necessary to take a long, hard look at the cost of legal aid.

The House will be aware that the cost of legal aid has risen dramatically. In 1988-89, the cost was £475 million. Four years later, it is well over £1 billion—a rise of about 130 per cent. Revised estimates for this year already show a substantial increase on that enormous figure. Like all other hon. Members, I understand the importance of legal aid. Without it, justice would be denied to a substantial number of those who are worse off, but action is necessary to curtail the rising cost. Legal aid should not, therefore, be regarded as some form of income support designed exclusively for the convenience of the legal profession.

Mr. Llwyd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, who has sat through the entire debate.

Mr. Llwyd: On the question of necessary action, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the courts could be run more efficiently? When I was in private practice as a solicitor, I appeared in court daily in a rural part of my constituency. I found that there were often five or six other solicitors waiting for their cases to come up. They frequently waited for half a day, which cost the country hundreds of pounds. Should not this matter be taken up immediately at the highest level? Secondly, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the practice, in civil listing centres, of listing three active trials per day on the basis of the often wrong premise that two will settle is also stupid, ridiculous and costly and ought to be looked at?

Mr. Pawsey: Again, the hon. Gentleman makes valid points, which I have no doubt will be referred to in my hon. Friend's winding up speech. Clearly, it would have been very helpful to listen to a major contribution from the hon. Gentleman, had time allowed.

It is argued that as solicitors are human there may sometimes be a level of abuse, with adjournments requested and granted by the courts even when they are not strictly necessary. Cases are sometimes disposed of with a slowness which may owe more to legal aid than to legal complexity. I readily accept that the fault is not all on one side. Were the clerk of a court to consider lists more carefully, it might prove possible to avoid having solicitors waiting in court while unrepresented cases are heard.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): And barristers.

Mr. Pawsey: I take my hon. Friend's point.

It should always be remembered that the legal aid clock is ticking at the charge while the solicitor or the barrister is in court. Even if it is not his case, it is a matter of "They also charge who only sit and wait."

The Lord Chancellor itemised four principal factors affecting legal aid. Due to shortage of time, I shall not go through them, but I commend them to the House. These are admirable regulations which should be implemented as soon as possible.

6.32 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): As a practising barrister, I should first declare an interest.

We shall oppose these regulations in the Lobby because they represent a betrayal of the bipartisan approach to legal aid which has lasted in this House since 1949, when the Lord Chancellor's Department was able to announce, to universal acclamation, proposals

"as a result of which no one would be financially unable to prosecute a just and reasonable claim or to defend a legal right."

In 1979, during a debate on the outgoing Labour Government's proposals to improve legal aid, it was clear from remarks of the then shadow Solicitor-General—soon to be Solicitor-General Sir Ian Percival—that the

incoming Conservative Government would be committed to a legal aid system such as had been described by Sir Hartley Shawcross, the Attorney-General in 1949, as

"a charter for the little man to the British courts."

The Legal Aid Act 1979, under which these regulations are made, is a real charter—not a phoney charter such as has been introduced by the present Government. It is a charter providing that all people, regardless of their means, should have access to the courts. It is not the sort of access that we have heard described—access to the Ritz for someone unable to buy a meal within those sacred portals. The Act provides a right to legal assistance and advice, to ensure that no one is financially unable to prosecute a just and reasonable claim or to defend a legal right.

That cross-party consensus is betrayed in these regulations and by the Lord Chancellor, and Conservative Members who vote for the regulations ought to be ashamed of themselves. The right of all people, even the most deprived and regardless of means, to access to the courts ought not to be a matter of party political controversy. Legal advice and assistance for those who need it ought to be a right. In the course of the debate to which I have referred, Ian Percival drew an analogy. He said that this right ought to be comparable to people's right to health care. The then Mr. Percival, the Conservative shadow Solicitor-General of the day and Solicitor-General-to-be, said:

"Just as it was unthinkable that an accident victim's injuries should be untreated through inability to pay his doctor, so he should not be prevented through lack of funds from pursuing his just remedies at law."—[*Official Report*, 30 March 1979; Vol. 965, c. 841.]

Mr. Percival was right then, and we are right in our opposition to these regulations.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Hon. Members will have seen early-day motion 1726, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), myself and other hon. Members, concerning benzodiazepine cases. Across the country, there are about 18,000 such people in great hardship. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should take a fresh look at such cases and at the way in which multi-party actions are handled? Does he agree that, in any review, the House should look very carefully at the possibility in such cases of the introduction of no-fault liability? That might assist——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The time available for the debate is limited, and this is a very long intervention.

Mr. Boateng: There is certainly scope for taking up the issues raised by that important early-day motion. It is possible, not least in the area of multi-party actions, to make some savings in terms of legal aid and to provide better protection from those affected by oppressive action.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): The hon. Gentleman made a point about limited funds. The funds for the national health service are not unlimited. Does the Labour party believe that funds for legal aid should be unlimited? If not, what limit would it set?

Mr. Boateng: In this House it is customary, when someone has given way, to show a little more grace than the hon. Gentleman has shown. However, I shall respond in kind. We believe that it is as wrong for health to be rationed in the way that the Conservative Government have rationed it as it is for access to justice to be rationed, as they propose to do under these regulations.

It is important that we put the interests of the consumer above all other considerations. Of course we should take note of the question of remuneration and of costs. It is important that we seek ways of achieving efficiency in these areas, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) indicated, but it is important also to look at how the interests of the consumer are affected by these regulations.

Like many other hon. Members on both sides, I expect, I have received letters from numerous solicitors—not only legal practitioners, but social work practitioners and others involved in this area—as well as from people in receipt of legal aid. Perhaps the most striking of those contributions came from a firm of solicitors called Daniel and Harris, which practises in north-west London. On behalf of solicitors who represent not the fat cats of the Queen's Bench division and their Fleet street employers —important though that area of law undoubtedly is and as erudite as the contribution from the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) was—but the poorest and most disadvantaged, that firm stated:

"The majority of our clients do not choose to go to law. Battered women do not have a choice about taking injunction proceedings to protect themselves and their children. Local authority tenants do not have a choice about defending possession proceedings, often for rent arrears that have arisen because of the council's failure to pay itself housing benefit. The homeless do not have a choice about challenging the council's decision to refuse to house them. The social and human costs of the Lord Chancellor's proposals are enormous. The proposals are mean, short-sighted and unjust."

The people concerned in the field share that view without exception.

Although the proposals are unsatisfactory, it is no wonder that they fail to meet the interests of justice when we consider how they came into being. The proposals do not stem from research carried out by the Lord Chancellor's Department into cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Opposition Members, and, I hope, hon. Members in all parts of the House, want that research to be carried out. As my hon. Friends the Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) have said, we want a thorough and comprehensive review of the cost-effectiveness or otherwise of the legal aid system. To go beyond that, we would like a broad view taken of the whole of our criminal and civil justice system to see how it can be made more consumer friendly and how it can deliver the goods more effectively to people seeking justice.

The proposals do not emanate from that compulsion. They emanate from the Treasury. The origin of the regulations lies in the Treasury and in the desire to save money at the expense of justice. That is no basis on which to proceed, and we shall oppose the regulations for that reason.

The impact of the regulations on a particular section of the community which has not been mentioned very much in the debate causes particular concern and is illustrative of a wider problem in respect of the Legal Advice and Assistance (Amendment) Regulations 1993, which deals specifically with the green form and advice by way of representation. The people about whom I am concerned here are those who require the assistance of the legal advice

[Mr. Boateng]

and aid scheme when dealing with issues of mental health and care in the community. As a result of those regulations, many of those people will slip through the net. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) reminded the House of the Lord Chancellor's stated concerns in that area and his reference to the importance of a safety net to ensure that people do not just slip through the system as a result of the regulations. We are entitled to ask where that safety net is. What proposals are being introduced today to show that consideration has been given to that area?

I will give a brief example of the impact of the regulations in respect of mental health. Section 47 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 will give carers and users of services legal rights to assessment from 1 April. From that date, too, however —it is ironic that it should happen on the same day—many of those people will be unable to afford the advice of a solicitor to enforce those rights. What is the point of giving rights with one hand while taking away the means of enforcing those rights with the other? That is unfair and it is not right. The House should reflect that in the Lobby tonight.

The problems do not end there. Let us consider the impact of the regulations on a person of modest means —I make no apology for joining my colleagues in emphasising that particular aspect of the regulations—and particularly the way in which they affect women. Time and again, women are disadvantaged. I have an example of that from Sunderland, Tyne and Wear. I will describe the lady in question as Ann T. She used to work as a part-time cleaner, but she is unable to work as she was badly injured by a motorist. Her husband earns £126 a week. She is currently entitled to legal advice under the green form, with a contribution of £12, so that she can be advised in respect of a possible claim against the Motor Insurance Bureau. Under the proposals, she will not be entitled to any subsidised or free legal advice or assistance. We have heard nothing from Conservative Members to show that people like Ann T. will be given any consideration in the regulations.

We shall oppose the regulations. They are a denial of justice. We intend to fight them tooth and nail now, and we shall continue to do so.

6.46 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): In the 14 minutes left to me, I will endeavour to reply to the many points that have been made in the debate. I hope that the House will bear with me and not think me graceless if, in those circumstances, I take no interventions.

May I first of all congratulate the Home Affairs Select Committee and its learned Chairman, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), on their report. I thank my hon. and learned Friend and tell him that I have taken note of his remarks on conditional fees, private legal insurance, ADR—alternative dispute resolution—and small claims procedures.

May I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) on his thoughtful speech, which brought the proceedings of the Home Affairs Select Committee to life here in the Chamber. However, I would not wish to raise his hopes on rapid progress on those matters of co-operation with the professions which have been on the agenda of the efficiency commission since 1986. Together with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), I acknowledge the very remarkable talents of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn).

Mrs. Roche: I am extremely grateful to the Minister for giving way and for his congratulations to the Home Affairs Select Committee. Given those congratulations, may I remind him of the Committee's recommendation that "the Government commit itself to restoring cuts in eligibility in real terms when compensatory savings are found, and that it set a long term goal of ensuring that citizens have access to advice and assistance either free or at a price they can afford"? Will the Minister give that assurance?

Mr. Taylor: The cost penalty of allowing that intervention is probably a matter of regret. However, I promise the hon. Lady that I will very carefully consider that. In fact, having read the Select Committee report once, I will re-read it. I cannot say fairer than that.

I was addressing my remarks to the very unusual talents of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross. He said that expenditure on civil legal aid in Scotland has dropped. I am afraid that I must tell him that there has been a large surge in civil legal aid expenditure in Scotland over the past year—almost £24 million now compared with £16·5 million in 1991-92.

Several hon. Members spoke about improving the efficiency of court procedures. There is a Standing Committee operating in Scotland to that end and there is the royal commission in England and Wales. I am sure that all who follow these events look forward with interest to their results.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) looked for further instruments of control. I invite him to share our thinking in anticipation of standard fees, franchising and fixed hourly rates in non-matrimonial cases, alongside his proper hopes for alternative dispute resolution.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Birmingham) and others spoke of the vulnerabilities in certain circumstances of women. It is important to remember that for civil legal aid for women facing domestic violence, it is likely, where a husband or wife have contrary interests—where their means are separately assessed—that, women in those circumstances will be among the least affected by the changes and will be ready candidates for an emergency legal aid certificate.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that I shall be more than glad to look at the difficulties to which she referred with the Legal Aid Board and I shall be happy if she will pursue those matters with me and my Department.

I must tell the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey)—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry if I pronounced his constituency incorrectly; I shall content myself with referring to it simply as Kilmarnock. He detected the increase in Scottish expenditure as a blip. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary explained, the case-load, measured by grants of legal aid, which will fuel future expenditure, has continued and is continuing to increase inexorably in Scotland.

In 1979, the cost of legal aid was less than £100 million. In the year which ends today, it will be £1·1 billion. Over the past four years alone, legal aid expenditure has risen by 130 per cent. That cannot be allowed to continue. If it were to continue, expenditure would be nearly £2 billion by the mid-1990s.

The measures which are contained in the instruments that are before the House will help to contain the large and rapid growth in expenditure. But in doing so, they will safeguard access to justice to the greatest extent possible and will target the available money to where it is most needed.

It is important to remember that there is no question of legal aid being cut. Expenditure will rise by 10 per cent., 10 per cent. and 10 per cent. over the next three years to £1·528 billion in 1995-96. Over the same period, we expect the number of "acts of assistance"—that is, grants of legal aid or advice and assistance—to rise from 3·4 million in the current year to over 4 million. That is an increase approaching 25 per cent. In 1979-80, there were fewer than 1 million acts of assistance. The legal aid scheme is not being destroyed. It is continuing to grow.

It would be wrong to deny—and we have not sought to hide—that, as a result of the changes, fewer people will take advantage of legal aid than otherwise would have been the case. But the figures that I have given put into context the suggestions that the changes will affect as many as 14 million people. Clearly, it is nonsense to suggest that 14 million people will drop out of a scheme that helps just over 3 million people.

Let us explore that by looking in turn at civil legal aid, criminal legal aid and advice and assistance. In calculating disposable income—we talk about disposable income and that is important—for legal aid purposes, allowances are made for tax and national insurance, dependants, community charge, which in future will be council tax, housing costs, being rent or mortgage, water and sewerage charges and upkeep and insurance, work-related expenses, being fares, subscriptions to trade unions or professional associations, and the cost of child minding. In addition, assessing officers have discretion to allow other expenses, of which repayments of loan for home improvements and school fees are examples. That is a pretty hefty list of items to be discounted in determining disposable income.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that I shall regret it, but I give way to my hon. Friend.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Put like that, my hon. Friend deserves to regret it. In fact, he probably will not, because I am simply asking him to confirm what the Lord Chancellor said and what has always been said—that disability allowances are also allowable.

Mr. Taylor: I think that is right—*[Interruption.]* I read the litany once. I am not sure that the House wants me to read it all over again.

The amending regulations provide that from 12 April, attendance allowance, disability living allowance, constant attendance allowance paid as an increase to a disablement pension and any payment out of the social fund will be disregarded in the calculation of disposable income for advice and assistance. Those are additional disregards which bring advice and assistance into line with legal aid. That additional help recognises in particular the needs of those with disabilities.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that explanation.

Mr. Taylor: I hope that I have been able to retrieve my apparent lack of grace and I thank my hon. Friend for asking an extremely helpful question.

It has been argued that the changes are unnecessary. It has been suggested that because there has been in recent months a fall in the caseload of magistrates courts and a fall in the volume of criminal legal aid orders, the necessary savings will be found without any changes. But the Lord Chancellor is committed to expenditure targets not only for 1993-94 but for the further two years of the public expenditure survey. We cannot change plans on the basis of what may prove to be merely a blip in the trend of criminal business.

It has also been suggested that civil legal aid and personal injury litigation in particular are self-financing. That is not the case. Civil legal aid as a whole carries a net cost to the legal aid fund and, although the recovery of costs is relatively high in personal injury cases, so too does that category of case.

The Lord Chancellor and I appreciate the sincerity of the arguments which have been put to us, not least by the professions. However, the fact which must be faced is that the Lord Chancellor must take steps now to ensure that the expenditure totals to which he is committed until 1995-96 will be achieved. Ifs and buts and maybes will not do. We need to be certain that expenditure will be brought under control. The changes in the regulations will provide the required certainty.

But in attempting to achieve that control, we have done all that we can to preserve access to legal services. The scope of the legal aid scheme is unchanged: legal aid and advice and assistance will continue to cover the range of legal problems which it now covers. Almost half all households will be eligible for civil legal aid. That is not a bad poor man's lawyer. More than a fifth will be eligible for free legal aid and the same number will be eligible for advice and assistance. Criminal legal aid will be largely unaffected. Over the next three years, expenditure will grow by over 30 per cent. and the volume of legal aid business will grow by 25 per cent. We shall, of course, keep all that under review.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I will not give way to my hon. and learned Friend at this stage. To do so would be even more hazardous. I am sorry that he did not hear my earlier remarks and those of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary about the great talent that he has and how seldom we find that he is mistaken in his contributions to our debates, although he managed it today.

Working within the priorities set for public expenditure, we have had to set our priorities for legal aid. We have planned for significant growth and we have targeted the available money to where it is most needed. We still have a legal aid system of which we can be proud. It is arguably the best in the world and arguably the most expensive, too. But, as the Lord Chancellor said, every pound that is spent on legal aid is a pound that cannot be

[Mr. Taylor]

spent on housing, education, transport or the health service. This is a debate about priorities and we have taken a responsible position on the priorities.

I shall end with a quotation from Lord Williams of Mostyn, who said, since the autumn statement:

"Ours is probably the most generous system of legal aid in the world."

He is a former chairman of the Bar Council and he speaks for Labour in the other place. I agree with him and I commend his words to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 259.

Division No. 226] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'lre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgld)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allon, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Resolved,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions and Contributions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th March, be approved.

It being after Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Questions on the remaining motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Lang, pursuant to order [26 March].*

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Cost) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker *then put the Question on a motion in the name of Mr. John Smith.*

Motion made, and Question put:—

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Advice and Assistance (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 790), dated 17th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be annulled.

The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 301.

Division No. 227] **[7.18 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CHILD SUPPORT

That the draft Child Support Appeals (Jurisdiction of Courts) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 8th March, be approved.

LAND REGISTRY

That the draft Land Registry Trading Fund Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 8th March, be approved.

LAND REGISTRATION (COSTS)

That the draft Land Registration (Determination of Costs) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 8th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

Agricultural Prices

[Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 4620/92 and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 18th March 1993, on temporary national compensation for farmers in Germany, European Community Documents Nos. 4821/92, on the common organisation of the market in raw tobacco and on the 1992 tobacco harvest, 5018/93, on the allocation of quotas for certain varieties of tobacco in Greece, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 18th March 1993, on the progress made by Greece, Spain and Italy in the effective application of the milk quota scheme and on the situation on the market for milk and milk products, and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 22nd March, on national aid for sheep-farming in France.]

7.28 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4608/93, on the prices for agricultural products and on related measures, 1993-94; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate an outcome on the price proposals which takes account of the interests of United Kingdom producers and consumers, builds upon the 1992 Common Agricultural Policy reforms, and takes full account of the realities of the budgetary situation.

The prospects for the farming industry are brighter than they have been for several years. I think that the House will agree that the first reason for that is that the uncertainty which has hung over the industry for so long has been lessened by the completion of the major part of the proposals for common agricultural policy reform. That provides a framework for the development of a competitive industry for the rest of the century. It gives farmers the stability they need to plan ahead. There is a great deal more to do, but for the major products that so dominate the British farming scene, we have laid the pattern for the coming decade.

The agreement contains several positive features. By cutting prices and reducing the role of intervention, it will bring farming nearer to the market and encourage farmers to pay much greater attention to the demands of consumers. It will reduce the resource costs of agricultural support in the Community. Overall, the costs imposed by the CAP on the consumer and taxpayer will be lower as a result of the agreement. The agreement marks a major step forward in the integration of environmental considerations into the CAP.

A last but important element of the agreement is that it does not discriminate against our farmers. The burden of reform will be borne by all producers—not, as the Commission proposed, simply by larger, more efficient farmers. Many people, including Labour Members, openly doubted that that was possible. They could not have been more wrong. None of the Commission's proposals which would have discriminated against larger producers was carried through to the final agreement. All the producers will benefit from the various compensation payments which now constitute such an important part of the reformed CAP. It was essential for the future of our farming industry that we won that point.

This year we shall begin to see what the agreement means in real terms. Whereas previously 7 per cent. of spending on the CAP came to Britain, now 9 per cent. will come to Britain. If the MacSharry proposals had been accepted, Britain would have received less than 7 per cent. So the increase that has been achieved by the negotiations is considerable. It will be seen in the returns that farmers will have this year and in future years.

In 1992 we also saw a welcome recovery in farm incomes. There is no doubt that farmers have done less well year by year. They often look at the rest of the country and point out that increases in food prices have been much outdone by increases in the prices of other products. It is surprising that, despite the excellence of food in Britain, every year a smaller proportion of the household budget is spent on food. It is a constant concern of farmers that their work is less respected and encouraged by the rest of the community.

Nevertheless, farm incomes rose by some 11 per cent. in 1992. That improvement was from a higher level than we predicted last year. The recovery is from a low base. Farm incomes have been under severe pressure in recent years and in real terms remain below the levels achieved 10 years ago. Those in the more exuberant organs of the press who tend to believe that farmers are doing extremely well should look at their own incomes and ask themselves whether they would like it if their income was lower in real terms than 10 years ago. It is important to make that clear lest people run away with the idea that the farmers are back to the income levels which were expected in the past.

However, there are encouraging signs for the future. The fall in interest rates is a major boost to many farmers.. Overall the industry's interest charges fell by 16 per cent. last year. Currently interest rates are at their lowest level for 15 years. Inflation is also down. Farmers are affected by inflation perhaps more than most other sections of the community, for they find it much more difficult to get back from the marketplace the inflationary additions which they have to pay on their inputs and their wages.

The farming industry has also benefited significantly from the green pound devaluations that have taken place since September, with support prices increasing by some 23 per cent. I wonder whether we might concentrate for one moment on the increase in the green pound and its effect on farmers.

In the past those in the sheep industry have reasonably groused that the arrangements for changes in the green pound have always been organised in such a way that they had to wait a whole year before they received the benefit. It is important to recognise that we ensured that the changes took place early enough for sheep farmers to benefit a year earlier than most would have expected.

So much of the extra money that will go to sheep farmers, especially to those in the less-favoured areas, has come not from the automatic reaction of the green pound but from the specific decision of a Government determined to protect the farmers' interests. As a result of the changes, farmers can be cautiously optimistic about their prospects for the year ahead. However, it is not feasible to look much further into the future because it contains other uncertainties, albeit fewer than previously.

The industry needs to make the most of the opportunities that exist now, using this better time to prepare for periods that may be more difficult in the future. We should take advantage of the competitive level of sterling. Already, exports of sheepmeat were up in 1992 by 30 per cent. Exports of pigmeat, in which we often think that we do not do so well, were up by 25 per cent. The industry must build on those successes and make itself fit for the rigours of the future.

We now have to implement the reformed CAP schemes. I know that there is considerable anxiety among farmers about the administrative burdens which they fear that the schemes will impose upon them. I am cheered that several people, including those who are not at all happy with the place of Britain in Europe or with Maastricht and the like, have said to me that they are pleased with the quality and care with which we have produced the documentation and forms that farmers have to fill in. That is a great tribute to staff in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We have brought farmers in at every point to ensure that the forms are as they would wish them to be—as simple as possible.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the forms. I put a towel round my head and went through them last night. I thought that it was going to be awful. But they are extremely well designed, simple to follow and virtually foolproof. My right hon. Friend will be glad to know that the chairman of my local county farmers union has gone on record today saying emphatically that farmers must get the forms in by the crucial date of 15 May and no bones about it. I am convinced that farmers will be able to fill in the forms without making mistakes.

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend. I hope that hon. Members will recognise that, whatever their concerns and wherever they stand on the issue of European integration, they must ensure that every farmer returns the forms before 15 May. That is crucial. A great deal of money hangs on it. There is almost £1,000 million this year and there will be almost £1,500 million next year. That money needs to come through.

There is a second important date to which I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) would have referred, if she had had time. We have put the date on a special piece of paper inside the package that will come to every farmer this weekend. I hope that every farmer will have it by Monday; some will have it on Saturday. The special piece of paper reminds farmers of the second date, which is 17 April. That is the last date on which Ordnance Survey can guarantee in its one-stop system to provide the maps that farmers need.

I hope that most farmers have sought the maps already. Anyone who has not done so should do so at once. The quicker that farmers obtain the maps, the quicker they can fill in and return the forms so that we have some chance of checking that they are right. I hope that there will be every opportunity to help farmers fill in the forms. Our regional service centres are staffed up to give advice. But again, the quicker that we receive the requirements, the quicker we shall be able to answer them. *[Interruption.]* It is all right for Opposition Members who will not have to fill in the forms. They will not receive the money and they would not lose out if they had not filled in the forms. I know that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will go round his farmers making sure that they fill in the forms properly.

The penalty for mistakes in filling in the forms could be severe. But we are talking about a great deal of money. We are determined that the same rules will be carried through

[Mr. Gummer]

in every country of the European Community. I have looked at the forms in most other countries and our forms are very similar. However, the explanatory documentation that we have issued is much clearer. It is all in one place. Farmers will not have to scrabble around for different booklets and so on. This has been an example to others. I suspect that other countries will follow us in the future. I assure the House that the same information will not have to be produced next year. We hope to use a database to send the documentation to every farmer in the country, who will then only have to update it. That will make a major difference.

We are doing our best to keep the demands on farmers as low as possible. However, we also want to meet their major requirement, which is that they should not be asked to do in Britain what farmers are not asked to do elsewhere. That is why the forms are standard throughout the Community. The Commission and the Council will be able to check whether the forms are properly filled out and, if they are not, the farmers will not get the money. That will be as true in Italy as it will be in Britain. That will be a major change.

Labour Members who are keen on the European Community—*[Laughter.]* I understand that those hon. Members are publicly committed to a closer union in Europe and therefore share my attitude to the Community. They would do better if they giggled less and supported more. Many of us spend a great deal of time —*[Laughter]* When I make a joke, I shall ask hon. Members to laugh. It would help a great deal if we could get the rest of the Community to follow the high standards that we have maintained in Britain. However, I question whether the Community has the same determination as Britain to keep the documentation and the demands at the lowest level. We have therefore asked the new commissioner to consider ways to simplify the rules and he will come forward with proposals. We are also seeking to achieve that through the Council and other available mechanisms.

It is against that background that we should consider the Commission's proposals for price fixing. Quite frankly, they are disappointing. They are largely a roll-over collection of proposals at a time when there is a need for some fairly substantial changes. The reform of the CAP is not complete; we still do not have an up-to-date wine regime, we do not have changes in the sugar regime, we have not completed the work that we need to do on the beef regime and we still have the enormous expense of intervention hanging over the market. It is regrettable that the Commission has not even brought forward its proposals on fruit and vegetables, olive oil, rice and cotton. There is a need to reduce expenditure in all those sectors. Unless we do that, we will face real difficulty in paying the bill and meeting our expenditure within the guidelines.

We have made substantial progress in the reform agreement on integrating environmental considerations into the CAP. I should have liked there to have been more and I still want cross-compliance. I think that, in the end, the public will demand that, where the taxpayer pays out money, it must be to farmers who practise environmentally friendly farming. The farmers who are doing that—and they are the vast majority—will increasingly demand that their peers come into line, because the small number who do not farm in that manner harm the reputation of all.

Earlier today, I spent some time addressing the Association of Small Farmers, when it was brought home to me that the farmers felt considerable concern about their status and reputation, which are not what they were. Part of the reason for that has been the activities of a very small number of farmers and cross-compliance could go a long way to putting that right. If there was a more generalised system of cross-compliance, every suburban dweller and urban liver would know that, at the core of the system, was a concern for the countryside and the environment and a respect for the soil and husbandry.

I fear that the Commission's proposals take too little account of the difficult budgetary position that the Community is likely to face in 1994. With lower estimates of Community GNP, the guideline next year is now expected to be little higher than this year. With the increased costs of CAP reform beginning to have a real impact on the budget of 1994, there are fears that, on current trends, expenditure could be set to exceed the guideline even before the costs of the recent ERM realignments are taken into account. The Edinburgh Council agreed to some easing of the current rules to help with the latter costs, but any increase in the guideline remains out of the question.

In those circumstances, I feel that a prudent price settlement is required. We need now to bring spending under control, because otherwise the decisions later in the year will be much tougher. It is also essential that we do not agree anything that would increase the cost of the CAP. In particular, the agreement reached in December on the reform of the agrimonetary system must not be reopened.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be aware of the complicated nature of that system. You are no doubt familiar with the way in which the switchover mechanism works. If that has temporarily escaped you, I am sure that the hon. Member for Workington can explain it in detail. The system has an artificial effect on prices in countries with hard, tough currencies. One of the reasons why Germany has been able to maintain its view on the deutschmark is that the German farmer has been protected, because of the switchover mechanism, from the effect of too strong a currency. That is why it was only with the greatest reluctance that we agreed to the mechanism continuing for two years. Now, there is pressure on us to protect countries with strong currencies against even the small effect that the switchover system allows. That we cannot and will not do.

In addition to the price-fixing proposals in the dairy sector, the Commission has presented two reports to the Council. As, to some extent, they overtake the price-fixing proposals, it would be misleading if I did not mention them in the context of the debate. The first report considers the case for the 1 per cent. quota cut for 1993-94 that was provisionally agreed last year. The House will know that it is not the Government's policy to support further cuts in quota. We already produce less butterfat than we need —that has been so for most of the century and we have always imported large quantities of dairy products. A 1 per cent. quota cut has a much greater effect on a country that is 85 per cent. self-sufficient than on countries that produce considerably more than they need. Therefore, I have always believed that a cut in the butter price rather than in

the quota is a better way to deal with these matters. For that reason, I am pleased that the report concludes that the market for milk and milk products has improved and that it proposes that the quota cut should be deferred and reconsidered next year. It also concludes that the butter market is very weak and proposes that the support price for butter should be cut by 5 per cent. for the coming marketing year, rather than the 2·5 per cent. provisionally agreed last year.

The House will recognise that that is another example of the Commission moving towards the United Kingdom's position rather than the position taken by other Community countries. That small group of hon. Members who still find themselves unhappy and uncomfortable within the European Community should recognise the degree to which decisions now being made are the same decisions that Britain would have made were it making them on its own, outside the Community.

There has been a fundamental change in the way in which the Community is moving, not least on agriculture. We should consider how the CAP is now operated. At a meeting earlier today someone said to me, "It is surprising how far we have moved away from the system that we took on when we joined the Community, towards the system which we once had and which was much closer to the market and to the mechanisms that we know to be good." Those are real victories for the United Kingdom.

The second report covers the implementation of the milk quota system in Spain, Greece and Italy. I hope that the House will distinguish between those three countries because they all have different issues at stake. There is no doubt, for example, that if Spain had had accurate production figures in the first place, it would have had a higher quota. Spain is, in any event, a deficit producer. It now has accurate figures and has already begun to cut its production. It is important for us that Spain should do that: the less that Spain produces, the greater will be our opportunity to oppose a cut in quota and the more markets there will be for over-production in France.

We have said that the Spanish will be given no help with their quota until they have made the necessary cuts. One million tonnes must be taken off the system before we can accept that Spain should have the quota that she would have secured historically.

Greece has a deficit in regard to the production of fresh milk. It cannot import from the rest of the Community and does not produce enough milk for its own internal needs. Obviously, Greece should be able to produce enough for fresh milk consumption; that is entirely sensible and does not interfere with our markets.

In Italy, the issue is much sharper. For years, the Italians promised us that the quota system was being implemented; later, it became clear that it was not. I have therefore made it plain to the Commission and the Council —as have a sufficient number of my colleagues—that we will consider very carefully before providing any help on the quota front. In its first report, the Commission says that Italy has not yet done what it must do before the Commission can make a recommendation on the basis that Italy has taken the necessary 1 million tonnes of production out of the system. We shall want clear proof of that.

I have made clear my feelings about the way in which Italy has dealt with these matters. I can, however, give one piece of good news. This year, for the first time, the Italian Government reported their own failures to the Commission. Some of the popular press said how appalling it was to discover the perpetration of fraud in, for example, the growing of durum wheat; what was not mentioned was the fact that that fraud was detected by the Italian Government. Satellite pictures were taken on the Italian Government's demand and they accepted that there would have to be a reduction in the money that they received.

That is a big change, which must be supported. I have seen no such development in my earlier dealings with the Italians. I think it only fair to draw attention to the change, given the tough way in which we must approach such matters. I hope to be able to discuss it with the new Italian Minister, who is the fifth with whom I have had to deal in recent times. I am sorry about the demise of the last Minister, in circumstances of which I know nothing; for the first time, an Italian Minister appeared to be on top of the job and to be getting on with the business of dealing with these matters. I shall, however, chase his replacement: I hope that he, too, will be on top of the job, with none of the attendant disadvantages.

There is already a success to report. I found it intolerable that the Commission presented proposals on vining peas, for example, when they were not supposed to be introduced to the arable area scheme and then took them out after people thought that they would be included. That left us all in a difficult position, legally and morally. The same seemed likely to happen with linseed; that would have been very serious for farmers in Britain and Germany, the two countries in which linseed matters most.

We have persuaded the Commission to announce that there will be no question of linseed's inclusion in the arable area scheme this year and that has set many farmers' minds at rest. We secured that assurance in the teeth of opposition and I believe that it shows that the Commission and, indeed, the Community are becoming much closer to the realities of life.

The decisions that we make each year in the annual price fixing are important to farmers, but they are concerned with the detailed workings of the common agricultural policy. In focusing on the detail, we must not lose sight of the larger picture—the reasons why we need a thriving farming industry and the reasons why that objective merits support from both Government and Opposition.

We need farmers to produce food. We may have surpluses in the European Community, but we would be very foolish to assume that surplus will never again be followed by shortage. The world is not as it has been in the past and it is not difficult to imagine a scenario in which shortages might arise. There need not be much climatic change, or a great increase in the taste for "temperate" food in developing nations—which is one of the first consequences of improved living standards. There need not be much effect on the speed with which technological change is introduced, because of environmental questions, for a change to take place in the whole way in which the supply of food is kept ahead of the population increase.

Why, in past years, were the gurus wrong—all those who told us that world population would change the patterns of life, and that the battle beteen south and north would replace the east-west battle? Because the population increase was outpaced by the rapid technological advances in husbandry. Such a result is possible only if the speed of development is maintained. Now, more and more people have real concerns, insisting that we take longer to license,

[Mr. Gummer]

take more care in what we do and are more sure of what we let into the atmosphere. Such action changes the pattern fundamentally.

I do not think it helpful to suggest that we rest on the assurance that there will always be a food surplus. I cannot say when the change will take place; indeed, I cannot be absolutely sure that it will take place. I know, however, that no Government or potential Government can sensibly leave the feeding of their people to such a hazard. It is essential that Britain's land continues to produce food and to be available for increased production; it is also essential for farmers to be able to bring about that increased production should the need come about.

It is no longer sufficient, however, for farmers simply to produce food. In the past, producing enough food to feed the whole population was an achievement in itself; nowadays, people want more. Consumers are used to a wide choice of foods and, to compete, our farmers need to produce what consumers want at attractive prices. I still hear farmers say that they do not want to produce a particular type of potato, or a particular weight of lamb, because they do not like it—although the customer demands it. In the end, it does not matter what the producer likes; what matters is what the customer demands. The producer can obtain a price—certainly, a premium price—only if he adjusts his production to meet the needs of the market. The farming industry must be focused increasingly on the market. It must be able to add value, diversify into new enterprises, lower costs and sell its products; it must be able to take a growing share of home and export markets.

We also need farmers if we are to retain our landscape and the countryside for which we care. That countryside was created by 2,000 years of farming and only by farming can we keep it—with all its glorious variety—for the next 2,000 years. It must be farmed in ways that respect its traditional characteristics and the natural environment. The great majority of farmers already farm in that way: they take pride in their rôle as custodians of the countryside.

That rôle deserves public support and is increasingly receiving it. Where we ask farmers to go beyond good agricultural practice to benefit the environment, it is surely right for the general public to pay. People cannot be asked to do what is expensive for the general good unless they are provided with some help. That is the principle that underlies the environmentally sensitive areas scheme, which was pioneered in this country—not least by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling)—and has now been extended to the rest of the Community.

This is one of the ways in which Britain is leading the Community. All the major environmental schemes in Europe bear the stamp of Britain: we led the way. We persuaded Europe to make such measures the centrepiece of its CAP reform and we are generally regarded as the country that uses the most practical means to bring together the needs of the environment and the demand for food production. I took it a step further last week by announcing proposals to implement the Community's new agri-environment regulations. We are planning to build on the success of the ESA Scheme, with proposals for six new ESAs, and to introduce a number of new schemes, including measures to conserve moorland, to promote improved access to the countryside and to encourage organic farming.

I well remember that when I first joined the Ministry as Minister of State I was not allowed to use the words "organic farming". I remember finding it rather difficult to make an appointment with the Soil Association. I am not suggesting that the Government should say that organic farming is better than conventional farming; I am merely saying that Government should provide the opportunity for the choice to be made.

We are a nation that believes in choice and the pioneering work of my former constituent, Lady Balfour, who began the work of the Soil Association but who died recently, taught an attitude to the land that goes much further than the narrow tenets of the Soil Association. It was the concept of respecting the soil. I visited a farm that is farmed by one of our major farming companies—a very efficient outfit—and was extremely pleased when the first thing that the farm manager told me was, "That is where it is made: it is that soil, that tillage. Getting that right and respecting it is how we make the difference between profit and loss." That attitude should go much further than those who, properly, are the heralds of a different way of looking at the future of the countryside.

The proposals will add £31 million a year to the Ministry's expenditure on environmental schemes by 1995-96, bringing the total to more than £100 million by that time. When one recalls the small amounts that were possible when we piloted the first Bill through Parliament six or seven years ago, one realises that there has been a huge change throughout the country. No doubt the Labour party will suggest that more might be done—it did so at that time—but we have tried to build on our achievements and will continue to do so.

We can honourably say that every scheme that we have introduced has been a success and we have been able to extend it because of success rather than fear for its future because of failure.

I believe that the proposals will be money well spent if they contribute to the preservation of our countryside. We all need that countryside because the unfortunate fact is that the majority of our citizens live in towns and suburbs. They need the countryside for their green lung, which will be increasingly essential as the tempo of urban life accelerates. Rural life remains the guardian of continuing values. We would all be the poorer if they were lost. Farming families are at the heart of rural life. To produce food, to conserve the beauties of our countryside and to sustain working rural communities we need farmers farming the land. That belief is at the heart of the Government's policies on farming and rural society.

8.4 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move, to leave out from '1993-94' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the reduction in support prices contained in 1992 Common Agricultural Policy reforms; opposes the introduction of rotational set aside which will damage the rural economy and environment; regrets that the reforms do not adequately address the failures of the Common Agricultural Policy including its exorbitant cost to EC taxpayers; and calls upon the Government to press for a Common Agricultural Policy which breaks the link between subsidies and

production, rewards environmentally sensitive farming, reduces the cost of food to the consumer and encourages employment in agriculture and the countryside.'.

I agree with the closing remarks of the Minister. Indeed, all hon. Members would agree about the importance of the agriculture industry to our people. It is important because of the farm gate value of its output and because of the number of farmers and farm workers who are directly dependent on it.

It is even more important than that, because it provides the raw material for our food industries, which represent a large amount of investment and hundreds of thousands of jobs. Furthermore, the agriculture industry, in most rural parts of Britain, represents the core of the rural economy. Few employed in the industry are farm workers, but many jobs are dependent on agriculture. There can be no dispute about the importance of agriculture to our economy.

The Minister acknowledged—I was pleased that he did so—that the 1980s have not been easy for the agriculture industry. The Government cannot shirk their responsibility for these hard times. Britain's farmers did not see any of the Lawson boom. The latter half of the 1980s was disastrous for the industry, and only now are we beginning to see some slight recovery. As the right hon. Gentleman reminded us, that recovery still has not restored us to our position at the beginning of the 1980s.

The Minister said that the main factor for the increased optimism in the industry was that the CAP reforms had been settled. Who is he kidding? He does not believe that the MacSharry reforms are leading to increased confidence and hope in the British industry. He knows, like every other hon. Member, that the industry is looking forward to a better future because of black Wednesday—Britain's forced withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism, the devaluation of sterling and the consequent increases in support prices. That is the first, second and third reason why British agriculture can, we hope, look forward to higher returns, which we want to see translated into more jobs and higher investment.

Last week, we debated the Agriculture Bill, in the course of which the Minister and I referred to the Agriculture Act 1947 and the good old days when we had an agricultural price review and all that the House had to concern itself with was support prices and the bargain struck between the Government and the agriculture industry. In some respects, those were halcyon days, since when things have become so much more complicated. We then had a far better system of support for the British consumer and the industry, but the reality is that the European Community is where all the major decisions on agriculture policy are taken, and have been taken for a long time. That is why this debate is the major agriculture debate in the parliamentary calendar.

I turn now to the documents, some of which the Minister, for reasons which may become obvious, managed to avoid referring to. I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong, but at least two of the documents have something to do with tobacco production. I remind the Minister of what he said a couple of years ago:

"It is outrageous that we should subsidise the increased growth of tobacco . . . when most member states are seeking to reduce the consumption".—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. 789.]

He has changed his position a bit since then. On 12 June 1992, he said:

"It is not feasible to end . . . tobacco production."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 565.]

The Minister avoided the problem this evening simply by making no reference to the tobacco documents which are before the House. As the tobacco regime is costing the European Community about £1 billion per annum, and as the cost of the regime has been ratcheting up every year and was estimated to rise again in 1992, one is entitled to say that the Minister, by failing to refer to that regime, is guilty of a certain degree of complacency.

Mr. Gummer: I should hate the hon. Gentleman to feel that I am complacent. I could easily have said that under this system we are reducing the amount of tobacco which receives support from 460,000 tonnes in 1982 to 350,000 tonnes in 1994. In Greece, 200,000 small farming families are dependent on tobacco production. I believe that what I said on those occasions remains true. It is outrageous that we should be spending that money. We should reduce it—and we are reducing it, but it must be done at a pace which ensures that villages and small communities in southern countries are not wiped out at once. I believe that at the end of a reasonably short period of time there should be no support for tobacco. We are on the way. The measures have been so tough that the Greek Minister has held up many meetings because of the effect on his rural community. We can only move at a pace which takes account of the many livelihoods which depend on tobacco.

Dr. Strang: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's intervention. He has mentioned some of the points that I was going to make at the end. Tobacco is a labour-intensive sector. It is true that many jobs in southern countries depend on it, but it happens to be the most costly regime per hectare of all the regimes.

My final quotation in this respect is from the *British Journal of Addiction*. An article written by two authors—one French and one British—states:

"The common agricultural policy of the European Community subsidises tobacco production to the tune of . . . £900 million. This amounts to . . . £1,700 per minute, and is more in one year than the total amount spent on tobacco subsidies by the US in the last 50 years. The purpose of this policy was to maintain farmers' incomes and adapt community production to demand . . . The policy has failed. Expenditure has spiralled out of control, production of unmarketable tobacco varieties has risen enormously, and the EC is the world's largest importer of raw tobacco."

Despite the efforts to switch to alternative tobaccos, the regime is a disaster.

We must adopt a position of principle. Yes, we have to support the rural economy of the areas involved, but instead of talking about supporting the tobacco industry it is high time that the Government considered ways of enabling tobacco producers to move to other economic activities so that they are provided with alternative employment.

Did the right hon. Gentleman omit to refer to the document on national aid for sheep farming? I believe that he mentioned the document which provides for a continuation of temporary aid for the German agriculture industry when talking about the switch-over mechanism. I do not wish to make a major point of it, but does he accept that the Council of Ministers should make it pretty difficult for such national measures to be passed? If there is to be a level playing field and a common agricultural policy, it is not in the interests of our industry for other Governments who are prepared to spend their own money

[Dr. Strang]

to be allowed to provide additional, large-scale subsidies over and above those available to our producers under the CAP.

The Minister referred to the documents on milk, especially the milk quota. He seemed to be trying to talk tough on the Italian milk quota, but if hon. Members take the trouble to read his words I do not think that they will find he was being so very resolute. Milk quotas were introduced in 1984, and the Italian Government have failed to operate the system for all those years. It would be utterly unacceptable if the Italian Government were to receive an increase in their quota as a bribe for implementing the system from now on. I should have thought it sensible for any increase in the Italian quota to depend on at least one year's operation of the existing arrangements, which they should have been operating since 1984. That is a very important issue for this country.

I was rather surprised that the Minister made a great deal of our lack of self-sufficiency. I do not disagree, but the problem with the British milk quota is that we have a very competitive industry. It is generally accepted, especially with the increase in support prices and the devaluation of the pound, that we would be able to increase our share of milk production in the European Community if there were no milk quotas but a genuinely free market, because of the efficiency of our milk processing industry and its scope for expansion.

Mr. Gummer: I know that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House. I find his argument difficult to believe. If we were using all our milk quota for high value products, which were to be found on supermarket shelves in France and Germany, I should be much happier. At the moment, however, we are turning our milk quota into skimmed milk powder which we are exporting at a subsidised price. That is outrageous. It shows that the system does not produce the competitive edge that it should, so the hon. Gentleman's case does not stand up.

I hope that there will be changes in the milk industry so that it will be possible to claim what he claims. Perhaps we can then buy quotas across national borders and do what we should be doing, which is making milk products in the countries with the rain and grass to do so.

Dr. Strang: There is more to the system than the right hon. Gentleman suggests. We have a built-in preference in the pricing arrangements for liquid milk in that we have rightly attached a high priority to maintaining higher liquid milk sales. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman disputes the fact that Britain's fundamental climatic advantages, as compared to much of the Community, and the fundamental efficiency of our milk processing companies are such that, if we were operating in a genuinely free market without quotas, we would have more investment and more jobs.

It is indisputable, as many of the dairy companies agree, that investment in many aspects of processing, including those which do not need a great deal of milk, is inhibited because there is concern about obtaining an adequate supply of milk. In a speech at the end of last year, the right hon. Gentleman seemed to agree that it was regrettable that quotas had become a permanent feature of the milk regime. There is an implicit agreement that as part of the MacSharry reforms quotas will continue until the end of the century. I am not over-enthusiastic about the sale of quotas across national boundaries. I should like to think that Britain would buy the quotas, but I am a little uneasy that some countries, especially France, will find a way of loading the system so that we shall not see the desired movement of quotas to this country.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): Would the hon. Gentleman favour the complete free sale of quotas within the United Kingdom?

Dr. Strang: I am in favour of getting away from quotas as soon as we can and of incorporating in the milk support arrangements other ways of maintaining the livelihoods and jobs in our industry. I shall finish with the milk issue because I have much more to say.

We welcome the decision to remove the co-responsibility levy. I was a member of the Labour Government when the levy was introduced in 1977. We opposed it then, and I think that we have been fairly consistent in our opposition to it since. School milk is currently financed from the co-responsibility levy. I hope that the Minister of State will give a clear undertaking that there is no question of school milk being jeopardised in the long term as a result of the removal of the levy and that the Government will accept the obligation to continue the funding.

I will deal briefly with the price proposals. The price proposals for the maor commodities were predetermined by the agreement last year on the MacSharry reforms. The cuts in cereal and beef prices are positive measures. The right hon. Gentleman recognised that reform of the wine and the sugar regimes is of enormous importance because of the huge costs to the overall EC agricultural budget. Our amendment says that there are some positive elements in the reforms, but that judged against the scale of the problem and the enormity of the CAP they are totally inadequate.

To appreciate that fact, we must take a minute or two to remind ourselves of how big a disaster the CAP is and continues to be. It continues to force up food prices and maintain them at an unacceptably high level, imposing high costs on all families in this country, especially on the poorer families who tend to spend a higher proportion of their household budgets on food. The CAP represents a monstrous cost to the taxpayer; the sums of money involved in intervention buying and export refunds are mind-boggling. It damages international trade, and especially the positions of many developing countries, because of the policy of subsidising our surpluses and effectively almost dumping them on world markets. In essence, considering the money that the CAP costs, it fails to provide anything like the support that we should expect for the industry and for employment in rural areas.

I remind the House of the issue of fraud within the CAP. An excellent report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities entitled, "The Fight Against Fraud" was published at the end of last year. An interesting study had been carried out on milk refunds and the money spent on them, centring on two companies, described as company A and company B, in two different countries which account for a high proportion—10 per cent.—of all the money spent on milk export refunds. The report showed that the companies had not been audited since 1966 and concluded:

"There is strong evidence that fraud and irregularity continue on a large scale, not only in the agricultural sector,

but with the Structural Funds also, and that controls within the system are not sufficiently effective throughout the Community . . . As things are at present detected fraud is likely to be the tip of the iceberg, and serious dangers will remain until all concerned with the collection, administration, disbursement and use of these funds accept in full the principles of sound financial administration, reporting an audit . . . Notwithstanding the continuing efforts which have been made, the Committee are convinced that a great deal more needs to be done if fraud and irregularity are to be contained within tolerable limits."

That in itself is a major indictment of the CAP as it stands.

What about the so-called fundamental reforms agreed last year? First, I shall examine briefly the accompanying measures. When the reforms were debated last June people were in the dark about much of the detail of what had been agreed, and much still had to be worked out. I hope that when the Minister of State winds up he will tell us about the early retirement package. Why is it not being applied at all in this country? I do not see that as a rationalisation measure but as a measure whereby older farmers can be helped to move out of the industry and provide opportunities for other farmers; every time that happened, it would mean that another person had been found a job at a time of high unemployment. Secondly, what about the regulation on the forestry measures? I am sure that most of us would agree that they would be positive. What is the Government's attitude?

Thirdly, what about the agri-environment programme? The Minister said quite a lot about that and, as he reminded us, on Friday he announced his proposals to meet the requirements of the programme. It is with some satisfaction over the years that we in the Opposition have seen the importance of the environment dawn on the Government. We support the change that has taken place over the years in their attitude, following the policies adopted by the Labour party. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members read the documents the Labour party has published over the years, they will see that we have led opinion in this country on the environment and that the Government and the Conservative party have followed.

We must welcome the Minister's proposals, but an increase in his Department's environmental expenditure by only £31 million over three years, in the context of a departmental budget of about £8·5 billion over that period, cannot be said to represent a major shift in priorities. When my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) replies to the debate for the Opposition he will say more about the environmental impact of the changes and of the Government's policy.

Set-aside is the major supply control measure in the reforms, and the Opposition have deliberately singled it out in our amendment, because we do not believe that it is the right policy. We are sceptical about whether it will be effective—certainly about whether it will be as effective as the Government and the Commission try to suggest—in cutting cereal production. We believe that some of its effect will almost certainly be offset by greater intensification by farmers in their reduced acreage.

Of course, we strongly support breaking the link between subsidies and production, but we want the payments to be made for a positive purpose and to provide employment. We do not believe that we can possibly justify spending such huge sums on paying farmers to do nothing and to leave the land fallow. That is not an acceptable system, and we do not believe that it will be acceptable to the British people in the medium to long term. Rotational set-aside is not an environmentally positive measure and does not provide anything like the environmental benefits that we would like to stem from the policy of reducing cereal acreage in this country. Permanent set-aside is a different matter, into which it would be possible to build more effective environmental benefits, but here we are talking about rotational set-aside. For those reasons, we believe that the policy of set-aside should be opposed in principle.

Some of us were probably rather amused at the Minister's reference to the forms. He seemed to present as some great achievement all those documents that the farmers will have to complete. Yes, perhaps the Minister's civil servants have done quite a good job in producing all those publications—but does he not recognise that the very fact that they have had to go to such lengths, and that so much time and effort will be devoted to the forms, is in itself a fundamental criticism of what the Council of Agriculture Ministers agreed last year? The set-up is utterly indefensible.

If hon. Members have not read it already, I commend to them an article by David Brown, agriculture correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, which says:

"More than 240,000 farmers are affected by what is being described as the biggest farm information gathering exercise since the Domesday Book was begun in 1086 . . .

The National Farmers Union has been running a series of road shows to keep farmers up to date with developments. So far about 30,000 farmers have turned up and thousands more are expected from this weekend.

The Country Landowners Association has established a nationwide network of land agents to give 15 minutes of free advice to its members"—

[Interruption.] I am quoting from *The Daily Telegraph;* I thought that Conservative Members might appreciate that. The article continues:

"While assuring that efforts would be made to simplify the forms next year, Mr. Gummer said that the Government had always feared such a system would bring too much bureaucracy."

It certainly does. To try to make out that this is some great virtue is nonsense. It is itself a criticism of the system and of its complexity.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): The hon. Gentleman went on at great length about fraud in the tobacco regime. If he is so concerned about fraud in the common agricultural policy, how does he expect this considerable sum of money—amounting to £1 billion extra this year—to be given out without proper checks being made on those who apply for it?

Dr. Strang: That is the point. That is what I am saying. Given the system that was agreed at the level of the European Community, for which the Minister must share some responsibility, it was almost inevitable that one would end up with this sort of bureaucracy and with farmers having to spend hours of their valuable time filling in forms. But the hon. Gentleman is right: once you have the system in place, it follows that you must have all these forms.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman has just said that his real objection to the system is not that we are having a system like this, but that it is not quite so environmentally directed as it ought to be. His own propositions would end up with precisely the same need for precisely the same information on precisely the same forms. The hon. Gentleman must not mislead the country. He would need

[Mr. Gummer]

the same information produced on the same forms, but he would not have bothered to spend the time that we have spent, making it easy for people to fill in the forms. He must not mislead the country.

Dr. Strang: No, I will not mislead the country. I am not convinced that the environmental policies that we have been advocating would require this kind of form, but even if they did the British people would understand because they would see some real environmental benefit. They will see nothing from this. This is simply another way of spending their money. It is a way of spending their money which constitutes direct aid to the industry and to that extent we support it, but I cannot believe that it is impossible to develop a better system of making these direct payments to producers than the one currently in place.

That is not our major criticism of the system, however—far from it. Our criticism is that it does not address the real weaknesses in the CAP. To a limited extent—we acknowledge this in our amendment—it addresses the issue of the inflated prices of the CAP. The cut in the cereal price and the cut in the beef price are positive, but they fall a long way short of what is required. Does MacSharry adequately enable the Community to look forward with confidence to any GATT agreement?

It was somewhat surprising that the Minister did not mention the word "GATT". Surely if there is a major issue on the horizon of the agriculture industry it is the implications of GATT. We do not know what the position will be in relation to the United States and the GATT agreement, or what the attitude of the new French Administration will be, but we must recognise that any test of the CAP reforms must include a reference to the GATT agreement and to the need to cut the volume of subsidised agricultural exports from the European Community. Many of us are not convinced that these reforms will adequately render the CAP acceptable to the proposals in the GATT agreement.

Labour has been consistent in its pressure for a swift settlement to those negotiations. Subsidised exports of surplus United States and European Community agricultural commodities have swamped and depressed international markets, disastrously pricing farmers in the developing world out of their own domestic markets. The House will remember that an EC/US GATT agricultural settlement was reached in November, including a commitment from the EC to reduce over six years the volume of subsidised exports of each product by 21 per cent. The Minister and the Commission insist that the commitments can be met as promised within the limits of the measures agreed in the CAP reforms, but many authorities disagree. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will agree that the way in which the Council of Agriculture Ministers has shaped up on this price package so far does not encourage much optimism about meeting the objectives, particularly in the dairy sector. The Minister himself implicitly acknowledged that.

Our major criticism of the so-called reforms of the CAP, however, is that they have failed to address the biggest problem—the huge cost to the Community taxpayer. The cost of the CAP has risen again in 1993. In the past couple of weeks the Commission has confirmed that expenditure this year will be higher than anticipated. Much more serious, it has acknowledged that the cost of the CAP will go through the roof next year. It will certainly not come within the guideline. I quote from Agra Europe of 5 March:

> "The senior controller of EC farm spending has conceded that the EC Commission is likely to have to resort to 'creative accounting' in order to avoid exceeding the budget guideline in 1994 . . . Michel Jacquot [director of the agricultural guarantee fund] stated that the combined impact of a lower budget ceiling next year . . . and the higher cost resulting from the maintenance of the switchover system would cause serious problems for the Commission next year."

He goes on to explain what these creative accounting devices are, and they are pretty mind-boggling. They might include counting payments incurred in 1994 against the 1993 budget, closing the budget a year early or further delaying payments to member states—that is, the payments in our country by the intervention board to the agencies which intervene in the market.

The CAP reforms do not adequately address the huge cost of the CAP to British taxpayers and to taxpayers through throughout the Community. Because they fail to do that, because they fail to give confidence that we can meet the GATT obligation, and because they fail to give any confidence that we shall see any reduction in expenditure in the long term, they are inherently unstable. That is a bad thing for the industry because, as hon. Members will acknowledge, there is rightly a limit to the amount of money that the taxpayer is prepared to spend on agricultural support, especially when it is spent as wastefully as it is in the common agricultural policy. Against that background, producers cannot be confident about what the long-term future holds for them.

The reforms which continue to dominate discussion about the CAP do not meet what is required. They introduce unnecessary bureaucracy. They fail to cut the cost to the consumer sufficiently. They will not provide long-term support to which the industry is entitled. They will not reduce the cost of the CAP to anything like a level acceptable to British taxpayers and taxpayers throughout the Community. For those reasons, we urge all hon. Members to vote for the Labour amendment this evening.

8.37 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): It is very easy for the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) to stand on the sidelines and throw brickbats at the common agricultural policy because we all know that in many respects the common agricultural policy is a fairly unlovely creature. But it is all that we have and we must make the best of it.

I am grateful to be called first from the Back Benches tonight because it gives me the opportunity to thank my right hon. Friend and his team for what they have done in recent years to make the common agricultural policy far more acceptable, certainly to Conservative Members. They have improved it. They have moved it closer to the way that we wanted it, to the benefit of our farmers.

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East to say that we should dump Greek tobacco farmers or that we should take a stern view of assistance given by the German Government to German sheep farmers, but if we do not concede this kind of compromise with our fellow members of the CAP, what will they do when we go, as we did recently, to seek an additional 70p on a ewe for hill farmers in my constituency? We must live together, which means from time to time swallowing things that we do not

like to swallow. Improvement in the CAP has come slowly and that is why my right hon. Friend and his team have been impressive. The system is better because prices are now closer to world prices and that has been our aim.

I intend to deal with some of the environmental aspects of the CAP. Once again, the Government have a very creditable record in dealing with the environmental aspects of set-aside in particular. We have certainly moved the environmental aspect of the CAP to the top of the agenda. It was of no interest to France, to the Italians or even to the green Germans. It was this country that pushed forward the cause of environmentally friendly set-aside, and that is another credit to my right hon. Friend and his team. Only the other day, there was the £31 million package for new environmentally sensitive areas and for the restoration of moorlands and intensive grazing of hills. That is another great credit to our agricultural team.

There are problems—I accept what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East said on this—about rotational set-aside or fallow. I hope that, just as my right hon. Friend has improved things in the past, he will be able to get a better system for rotational set-aside. It is no good opposing set-aside. We cannot magic it away. The system has been adopted by Europe and, again, we have to live with it and to make the best of it. The problem of rotational set-aside is the requirement that fields should be cut on or after 1 May. In environmental terms, May day is as much of a disaster as it has been for the country generally, although it is enjoyed by people over there. I should like the May day bank holiday to go and the May day set-aside day to go as well.

The problem with rotational set-aside and the 1 May date is that if one allows a field to go wild up to 1 May, it becomes a honeypot for all wildlife, especially game birds and ground-nesting birds. They move into the area because it provides them with shelter and with food left by the combines in the previous season. It is also a reservoir of insect life and of weeds that grow in May. If the farmer starts to work on the field on 1 May, he is not only cutting the grass or ploughing it up, but cutting or ploughing the young partridge and the partridge chicks. That is why I was pleased that there was a meeting yesterday between the National Farmers Union and a number of bodies interested in wildlife to see whether they could reach a better compromise on the date. I am sure that many farmers who are environmentally responsible will move that day back from 1 May at least to 1 June so that the chicks, the ground-nesting birds and other wildlife have been reared by the time the mower or the plough goes over the land. I welcome any changes in that rule.

The reason for the rule is the prevention of fraud, which is a real problem with which our Ministers have to deal. It is not beyond the wit of Greek or southern Italian farmers who farm cereal on rather sparse fields to claim that a field that appears to be growing crops is growing nothing more than volunteer grain from seed left over by the previous combine. I urge that in our continuing review and improvement of this aspect of set-aside, we try to reach a better date for the mowers to begin their work.

The recent meeting shows that Britain's farmers are concerned about the environmental aspects of their policies. They know, as everyone does, that the CAP is costing a great deal of money and that the public are entitled to something for their cash. That is why farmers will enter the longer-term set-aside schemes, the woodland schemes and the permanent set-aside schemes. They believe that the public are entitled to a return on that money. I urge Ministers in the coming year to try to re-negotiate that system and not to let a load of more crafty Greeks or Italians do a lot of damage to a scheme of set-aside that is potentially beneficial for our wildlife.

8.44 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): We may find that there is an unusual degree of consensus about objectives across the Chamber this evening. I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) has just said about the long-term advantages that can be achieved by non-rotational set-aside. I shall come back to that point.

We get an opportunity to range over the strategic objectives of the CAP only once a year. In previous years, there has been a full six-hour debate whereas this evening, we may have four hours of debate. In the interests of restricted production, about which we are all talking this evening, I intend to be brief.

It is extremely important that the Minister's words about surplus and shortage should be at the heart of our debate. After a period of considerable surplus, it is all too easy to forget that shortage is even more dangerous. Surely a modest surplus is better than even the most marginal shortage. That must be true not only of the United Kingdom, but of the Community generally and of the world at large and it should be in the back of our minds throughout all our discussions.

Like the Minister, I have addressed meetings of and have had discussions with the Small Farmers Association today. One of the reasons why there is increased interest —outside the House at least—in all parts of the country, urban and rural, in the way in which the CAP is developing is not only that the CAP has got to a watershed in terms of cost, but that many people—non-farmers as well as farmers—are more aware of the visible products of the CAP than has been the case in recent years.

In the similar debate in February 1989, the then Minister, the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), stated:

"one of the biggest threats to the CAP and hence to our farmers would be failure to achieve a successful outcome to the GATT Uruguay round".—[*Official Report*, 27 February 1992; Vol. 148, c. 28.]

Those who now have their body clock adjusted to "Farming Today" and who woke up early this morning will have heard the new Trade Secretary of the United States speaking on the subject. It is far from clear, four years after the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South made his prediction, whether the GATT round is any closer to completion than it was six months ago, let alone 12 months ago. If anything, we seem to be slipping back rather than going forward.

Although it is true that in the autumn there seemed to be some ground-breaking in an agreement on agriculture, that is surely now under threat and there is still no GATT resolution in sight. I know that some Conservative Members were delighted by the recent election results in France. I wonder whether they will still be delighted when our Minister meets the new French Minister, Jean Puech, and discovers whether there is a meeting of minds on the future of GATT and of the CAP. I believe that a time-bomb may be ticking away there. If so, we may find that even the comparatively small advance made in the latter part of last year is now at risk.

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

When the CAP reforms were brought back to the House last May, the Minister did not use the phrase "peace in our time", but the piece of paper that he waved at us was represented as a major triumph. It was represented as a triumph for simplicity, as a triumph for economy and as a triumph for an even playing field. On 22 May he said:

"This was a major step forward . . . for British consumers and taxpayers".—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 629.]

When we debated the agreement in full in June, the right hon. Gentleman said:

"Overall, the cost to the consumer and taxpayer will be lower under the reformed CAP."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 555.]

This evening, the Minister said firmly that what we are now debating is the increased cost of the CAP reform. Surely that is the issue about which people are concerned. Moreover, there appears to be no beneficial result from that increased cost. To many people, it is totally inexplicable where all those billions are going. It is clear that they are not going into the pockets of the comparatively badly off small farmers whom the Minister and I met today. Equally clearly, it is not going to the marginal parts of the country—the less-favoured areas. On the whole, it does not seem to be going to the livestock producers. Where is it going? Is it going into intervention costs, distributors, and processors' costs or supermarket profits? Of course, it may be going into fraud, in which case we shall no doubt see, with the tightening of the fraud provisions that the Minister has claimed are now coming into effect, where savings can be made.

As has already been said, there are in this bundle several detailed documents relating to farmers in the eastern Länder of Germany, tobacco growers in southern Europe, and so on. However, there are one or two significant omissions. It is true that there is a very useful document on attempts to tighten up in the case of the approach of three member states to milk quota, but a universal review of the milk quota system is surely long overdue. This matter was referred to in last week's debate. The Minister and I had an exchange on the whole issue of quotas and there was another brief exchange this evening. The Commission, under instruction from the Council of Agriculture Ministers, should undertake a universal review. The ad hoc attempt to deal with the Italian problem or the Spanish problem is not sufficient.

Similarly, for the reasons given a few moments ago by the hon. Member for Hexham, there is an urgent need for a complete analysis of the real alternative of non-rotational, permanent set-aside. Not only is this the core of the problems that affect the United Kingdom; the country is uniquely affected by them. From an answer that the Minister gave me a few weeks ago, it is apparent that we are imposing upon ourselves a degree of set-aside that is totally unrepresentative of the scale of our agriculture and is not reflected in any way in other member states. I believe that over 60 per cent. of the farmers of this country will be affected by the set-aside provisions. The nearest figure—34 per cent.—is that of Denmark and the level falls right away in many other countries. Set-aside has become the core of the United Kingdom's approach to the CAP reforms, rather than something that we can simply blame on Brussels. Indeed, this country has a terrible tendency—perhaps the Government encourage it—to believe that everything that is wrong with the CAP is "over there", or that if it is "over here", it must be the fault of people "over there". In this case, the reliance on set-aside is home-grown. It is a major mistake. This is only one of the reasons for the fact that the reforms that were put before the House last year, and are now coming slowly through the mincing machine, will prove to be very transitional. They are not a permanent solution to the major problems of the CAP.

On the question of environmental implications, I welcome all converts. I am delighted that there is unanimity in the House. I do not adopt the grudging attitude that Opposition Front-Bench Members display towards converts. My party and I were promoting these policies as long ago as 1978, when I co-authored a document entitled "New Deal for Rural Britain". I do not take any great pride in being 10 years ahead of others. Indeed, I am delighted that everybody else is with me now. However, if that is to be the approach, this country's insistence on relying on rotational set-aside flies in the face of all sensible and expert opinion.

It is impossible to provide new habitats for species by rotational set-aside. It is impossible to plan, on a long-term basis, to meet the needs of conservation with rotational set-aside. Even if it were sustainable as an environmental policy, it is quite unsustainable as a political policy to ask the people of this country, when they holiday in Cornwall—as I am sure they will—to pay for organised dereliction: nettles, docks, and so on. Surely the appearance of total neglect is too high a price to ask the taxpayer to pay in tight times. It might work for a year, but I do not think that it would work for longer.

In this regard, we shall have a major problem in the near future. There is the question of a wider awareness in this country of the needs of a hungry world, including the needs of a hungry eastern Europe. I believe that rotational set-aside will prove to be the undoing of the whole of the package. It is as if the package contains the seeds of its own destruction.

There has been much reference to the integrated administration and control system forms. The Minister was kind enough to reassure me last week that these would be in the hands of the entire farming community by 2 April. For a reason about which we agreed—All Fools' day—he said that 1 April would not be appropriate. What is important is the way in which the forms will be processed and treated. I have asked that the comparable forms to be used in the other 11 member states be placed in the Library for us all to see. I hope very much that those will be available before the House rises at the end of the week. With the new system of monitoring the whole way in which the CAP is operating, it is critical to ensure that the same amount of information is available to all Governments and that those Governments are in a position to act on it.

Of course, we support attempts to control fraud. Of course, we are anxious to ensure that the right information is available. It will be difficult enough in this country to ensure that maps are sufficiently up to date to meet the requirements. Are we confident that, in the case of peasants in Greece, the right information will be provided? Are we confident that if information is not provided, or is provided in a deliberately misleading way, Ministers in other Community countries will insist on the same attention to detail, monitoring and policing as applies in this country? We are not against the IACS forms; what we

are against is an unreasonable degree of bureaucracy in this country which is not matched by effective monitoring in the other member states. The Minister was quite right in referring to the need for a system of uniform effectiveness throughout the Community. One of the advantages of the Maastricht treaty is that it will give more teeth to the implementation of such systems.

We are not discussing potatoes in this debate. Potatoes do not yet feature in an EC regime. However, I hope that the Minister takes very seriously indeed the widespread misgivings—misgivings expressed in all parts of the House last week—about too fast a transition from the present managed market to the unknown of a regime that we do not understand. We do not yet know how it will work. That all-party concern is reflected by all sectors of the industry and by many other parts of the agricultural community.

There is a specific mention in the package of the sheep regime in France. The concern expressed earlier about the extent of derogation to national Governments will be widely supported. If we are to have a common agricultural policy and if there are broadly similar circumstances for particular sectors, it should be the exception rather than the rule that a Government, like the French Government, should be able to come forward with quite specific proposals for their sheep sector when that will obviously affect the competitive advantage of other sheep sectors in other member states.

It is difficult to ensure that the level of derogation is kept to a reasonable limit. However, we should be conscious of the potential conflict between increasing subsidiarity on the one hand and the initiative to which I have just referred on the other, which then calls into question the overall common agricultural policy. That may also affect what is eligible and what is not eligible for the so-called green box in the GATT negotiations.

If there is too much derogation and subsidiarity among member states' Governments, the green box might be called into question. That, again, is why there is an advantage in a Community-wide approach to issues such as set-aside and environmental advantages. Those issues will clearly fall in the green box and should therefore not be subject to any undermining by the GATT negotiations.

I have been brief as I am conscious that other hon. Members may want to contribute to what should be an overall assessment of what is happening to the CAP. There will be widespread support in all parts of the House for the concern expressed this evening for the health of the agriculture community. However, in my book, that is only part—although a vital part—of the concern that we should all share for the health of the rural economy, of the rural environment and of balanced communities in rural areas.

Of course, agriculture remains the core industry for most parts of the countryside, but it is not the only part. One of the complaints that is often voiced by many interests is that in the past the CAP has concentrated far too much on a selection of agriculture production objectives rather than on the health of the rural economy as a whole. That was why many of us were so concerned about the way in which the hill livestock compensatory allowances were downgraded in the past few weeks.

I hope very much that the new regime in France will not destabilise the CAP. However, we should all be conscious of the fact that, even with everything going the right way, the CAP reforms are by no means as permanent as they looked last summer. The Minister said this evening that uncertainty has been lessened. Last summer he said that it had been removed. The best that we can say this evening is that the CAP reforms may last a year or two, but, before very long, Ministers will be around the table again.

9.2 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I hope the fact that the House sat all night has not upset my normal placid attitude and reputation. However, I want first of all—I have given notice of this—gently to chide the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). While he was speaking, I could not help noticing that his Bench was as empty as most Benches. I mention that simply because he wrote a letter to the *Western Morning News* which I found rather silly and, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying so, a little sactimonious. In reference to last week's debate on agriculture, the hon. Gentleman wrote:

"Conservative MPs representing Cornish and Devon constituencies were, however, conspicuous by their absence."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, we often speak in the House to a less packed audience than we would perhaps like. For my part, I was missing last week because I was in Brussels on business as a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's leader, who did not vote at the end of last week's debate, also had an equally good reason for being absent.

Mr. Tyler: I must confess that my colleagues have a curious choice of priorities in that they came to listen to the Minister this evening, but did not stay to hear me.

Mr. Harris: They did pop in for a few minutes and then left to return to their dinners or to their pressing engagements. I fully acknowledge that we all have many engagements. I will not labour the point, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have the grace to acknowledge it.

My real criticism is directed at my right hon. Friend the Minister—and perhaps this is the effect of an all-night sitting. I said that I was in Brussels last week as a member of the European Legislation Committee. Last night, during the all-night sitting, I read the papers relating to that Committee. A particular paper was tagged to the papers for this debate—so that I am able to refer to it—on national aid for French sheep farming, a subject to which the hon. Members for North Cornwall and for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) referred.

I have had the advantage of seeing some of the papers in more detail because of my position on the European Legislation Committee, and I have been astounded by what they contain. During a meeting of the Agriculture Council on 17 March, the Minister—I informed him that I would refer to this issue—apparently agreed to a proposal that France should be allowed to put in place an £8 million subsidy scheme for its sheep farmers. The papers to the European Legislation Committee point out clearly that the Commission had considered that the provision of that national aid to French sheep producers was

"incompatible with the Common Market."

The reason given in the papers was that a letter had been written by the Minister of State

"to the Chairman . . . of the European Legislation Committee . . . explaining why Mr. Gummer gave his agreement, thus contributing to the unanimous decision, as required if the Commission's ruling was to be overturned. This involved

[Mr. Harris]

assurances by the then French Minister of the Interior that his Government would take all necessary steps to secure the free flow of goods, particularly fish."

Two points immediately arise. First, should our Ministers have put faith in the assurances of the then French Minister of the Interior on 17 March, knowing that the following Sunday was to see the first round in the French general election? As we know, that saw the exit of the previous French Government and, with them, the exit of that socialist Minister of the Interior. But apparently his assurances were worth while, and for that reason we went along with giving that extra aid to French farmers.

The second point is more fundamental. I do not for the life of me see why the British Government should be giving a special dispensation to the French Government to do what they have a duty to do, which is to allow and facilitate the import into France of legitimate produce from this country, be it sheepmeat, poultrymeat, dairy produce or fish. Whatever assurances were given, there have been continuing difficulties in getting produce into the French market.

I praise the Minister for doing his utmost to get the French Government to behave in a more reasonable manner. It is true that arrangements have been put in place to enable convoy facilities and protection to be given in respect of fish going into France, and I welcome that; but we should not have gone along with giving national aid to French farmers, apparently on the basis of assurances that the French Government would behave in a proper manner on matters on which they had an absolute duty—in particular to facilitate imports into France. There may be a completely different aspect to the story which has not been brought out in the documents which I have quoted. I am ready to listen to any explanation given by my right hon. Friend the Minister, and perhaps there is one.

We all know about the disgraceful behaviour in France, particularly over imports of lamb from this country, let alone fish. When a Government, be they French or any other, in the European Community do not carry out their duty on imports of agricultural produce, our Government should make it clear that, instead of giving them special dispensation to get their co-operation, we will, if necessary, in conjunction with the Commission, take action against them by using article 169 of the treaty of Rome, which makes it clear that a member state has a duty to ensure that legitimate imports get through.

I am sorry to go on about the matter, but there is another important aspect. The Community is in the process of giving £8 million as national aid to French sheep farmers. That may well make it more difficult for sheep farmers in the south-west of England, for example, to export legitimately to France, because the French farmers will have additional assistance. Earlier, I chided him, but I will support what my hon. Friend—I call him that deliberately because we both represent Cornish constituencies—the Member for North Cornwall said about the position of farmers in the south-west when we are considering national aid by other member states to their farmers.

Speaking on behalf of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East made heavy weather, as does the amendment, of trying to attack my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister has done a good job in trying to lead the reform process on the common agricultural policy. The hon. Member for North Cornwall is correct; this is not the end of the story. I would be appalled if it was. I hope—not fear—that Ministers will be back round the table working for further sensible reforms. Despite the great advances that have been made, aspects of the common agricultural policy still need to be reformed; it is a continuous process.

I welcome various points in the price review and the measures surrounding it. I was very pleased that there is not to be a further cut in milk quotas in the coming year. That is welcomed too by milk producers.

Having read the briefing notes provided by the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association, I cannot help contrasting the nature of those notes and their comments on the current position with the briefing notes which we all received a few years ago. There has been a distinct change in the reaction of farming unions, farming organisations and other bodies associated with rural life. That is very welcome.

For example, the National Farmers Union welcomes the Commission's intention to end the milk co-responsibility levy from 1 April this year. We can all say amen to that, because hon. Members on both sides of the House have opposed that nonsensical levy. The Country Landowners Association starts its briefing note by saying:

"The annual European Community CAP prices negotiation may be less controversial than usual this year."

We can read between the lines of that and see that the position is not too bad. The association goes out of its way to congratulate the Minister, rightly, on the green package and other aspects of the matters which we are debating tonight.

If I considered agriculture in my constituency and the county of Cornwall, I would conclude that there was a distinct and significant improvement in the returns for farmers, despite their difficulties. Farmers have not stopped grumbling and they still have problems. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East is correct to say that the improvement in returns is due partly to the value of sterling, but I do not think that it is entirely due to that. For example, I noted that broccoli—Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know it as cauliflower, but in Cornwall we refer to it as broccoli—and spring cabbage prices have been fairly good this year. The price of livestock has also been good: one need look only at beef prices. I am in no way saying that everything is wonderful or that the agricultural industry does not have its problems.

I take the proper point that my right hon. Friend made—that the improvements, which we all welcome, start from a low base as far as incomes are concerned. I am not for one moment suggesting that everything is wonderful but, when there is an improvement in income, at least we should point it out and say that that is good and we are moving in the right direction.

Attendance at this debate, which is not overwhelming, is perhaps in some way a reflection of the fact that there is not the anxiety about agriculture that there has been recently.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Quality.

Mr. Harris: The quality is high.

My mind goes back to previous debates on agriculture when the House was fairly full. I agree that the attendance tonight should not be interpreted as in any way detracting from the importance of agriculture. Agriculture is the backbone of my constituency and of the economy in

Cornwall and in many other parts of the country. We all want to ensure that agriculture has a future, in which people in it can have confidence. Without wishing to overstate the case, I believe that we are at least debating the issue in a much better atmosphere than in the past and with more knowledge of where we are going.

9.17 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The motion asks us to take note of

"the prices . . . and on related measures, 1993-94: and supports the Government's intention to negotiate an outcome . . . that will take account of the interests of United Kingdom producers and consumers, builds upon the 1992 Common Agricultural Policy reforms,".

I read that out purposely, because we need to examine carefully exactly what we are building on.

The Government say that the general principle underlying the price package is stability. We can all say "Hear, hear" to that, because, if there is one thing that agriculture has been lacking for many a good year, it is a set of objectives and a sense of stability to which the industry can look forward. That principle is extremely important. When we talk to farmers, as we all do from time to time, the one thing that they impress on us is the need for a set of clear objectives—where we are going—and a need for stability. On that basis, I shall judge whether we can build on the reforms that were agreed in 1992.

It seems that the Government's measure of stability is that prices this year are unchanged. Vital long-term stability is not especially evident. The Minister said that it is not feasible to look further into the future than next year. What sort of confidence does that give agriculture? However, I do not blame him for saying that. When we consider what we are facing as a result of the so-called reforms, I think that the Minister was wise to say that we should look no further than next year. Short-termism is evident throughout the so-called reforms.

There has never been any doubt that the CAP was in need of fundamental reform; we know that it has been a spectacular failure. Unfortunately, I have severe reservations about the deal that was reached in May 1992, which is contained in the documents that are before us. It does not constitute the fundamental reform that will bring stability and confidence to agriculture throughout the Community, and especially in the United Kingdom.

With cereals, there has been reform, but even that is flawed. The system still discriminates against larger producers, who must still put 15 per cent. of their land into set-aside to qualify for compensation. Those with holdings of up to 20 hectares—there are many such holdings in other EC countries—do not have to do that.

The Commission says that at the heart of the reform of the CAP is the desire to sharpen or reduce price support, to compensate farmers for a fall in income and to preserve the level of agriculture that is based on family farms. For my sins or otherwise, I have spent some time as a Member of the European Parliament. I know that, if one issue has been discussed more often in agriculture debates than anything else, it is what constitutes a family farm. My clear impression is that what we in the United Kingdom describe as a family farm is far distant from that which is recognised as such in the rest of the member states. Unfortunately, the so-called CAP reforms have been slanted heavily towards the interpretation of a family farm in the rest of the Community, to the disadvantage of United Kingdom agriculture.

The so-called reform that we are discussing will benefit smaller and less efficient producers. That needs to be underlined. Some systems of agriculture in the Community are relatively old-fashioned. They are relatively less efficient, but we must be careful about how we judge efficiency. It can be judged by how much money comes out of the public purse to a producer. If it is judged by how much is produced per hectare, the clear result is that United Kingdom producers are very efficient. That is not the position in many member states, because of the size and structure of agriculture.

The various reforms reflect a dramatic shift in emphasis. There is the danger that they will lead to the support of less efficient producers instead of efficiency. That will lead in turn to the danger of an ossification of backward practices. That could affect the ability of European Community agriculture to compete on the world market. That is particularly important when we consider that all the evidence shows that efficiency is likely to be penalised and lack of efficiency likely to be supported. We shall say to Portuguese farmers who work on very small holdings, "Do not change. We will support what you are doing," while at the same time we are in danger of penalising the more efficient producers. That is not the right framework to take us into what we hope will be a more liberalised world market in which competition will become more the order of the day.

Some Conservative Members have criticised my hon. Friends for criticising the Minister of Agriculture too much. I suppose that we are all sorry about that, but it is not my intention to do that. I certainly do not want to be accused of being churlish. There have been some improvements on the original package. The cereals compensation has been improved. Larger farms will receive compensation for all the land that they set aside. However, I still argue that the system discriminates against United Kingdom producers. We must never forget that. Larger producers will still have to set aside 12 per cent. of their land to qualify for compensation. That is not the case for smaller producers.

In the sheep regime, the headage limit has been increased from 750 in the original proposals to 1,000. That is to be welcomed. I also welcome the increase from 350 to 500 for lowland areas and the continuation of the 50 per cent. of the premium above those limits. All those improvements came out of the negotiation, and we should recognise and welcome them.

I also welcome the environmental moves that have been made. Certain CAP subsidies will be tied to observation of basic environmental standards by the producer. The Minister referred to the so-called cross-compliance when land is set aside. These are all small but welcome developments. I also welcome the greater emphasis on projects such as the creation of environmentally sensitive areas, although the amount of money involved remains lamentably small.

I have mentioned the most notable examples of the improvements that resulted from the negotiations. However, by no stretch of the imagination do even those improvements provide a stable framework for agriculture, especially in the United Kingdom. If one asks farmers the length and breadth of the land whether they feel more

[Mr. George Stevenson]

confident now about the future, they may say that they feel more confident about the coming year, but they may not feel so confident about the future.

Agriculture has to be a long-term project. One cannot turn the tap off from one year to the next. Therefore, while we shall see improvements this year, we shall be in danger of deluding ourselves if we consider that they represent the confidence and stability which farmers look for. Indeed, there are already signs that the deal is falling apart at the seams.

There is a continuing controversy about the compatibility of CAP reform and the GATT agreement. A special committee meeting of the Council of Ministers on 18 February reported little progress on the issue. It recorded that some member states had severe doubt about the compatibility of the CAP reform and the GATT agreement. Heaven knows what will happen when the new French Government carry out their threat. Perhaps they are another Government who will not keep their promises.

However, let us ignore that controversy for the moment and examine the issues that cause anxiety to everyone in the agricultural industry. People know that it is not possible to continue pushing costs up and up. They are not daft; they are business people.

Let us consider the reality. The 1993 budget for agriculture was set at 34 billion ecu. There is about 80p to an ecu, but I shall not do the conversion; I shall leave that to hon. Members. In mid-January, just two weeks into the budgetary year, the Commission said that it wanted a 1 billion ecu increase. Some of that, but not all, was due to currency changes. Some was due to the considerable increases in unplanned costs resulting from additional production. The estimated result for the 1993 budget is now 3·9 billion ecu above the 1992 budget. That is significant because the 1992 budget showed little increase over the 1991 budget. It is therefore obvious that the position is rapidly deteriorating.

Before I am again told that that is a one-off problem, I want to go into a little detail about the projections for 1994. The documents give estimated costs of 36·7 billion ecu, which is 2·7 billion ecu above the original 1993 budget and a staggering 5·6 billion ecu above the 1991 budget. In just three years, the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund has increased from 31 billion ecu to 35·5 billion ecu. There is the prospect that, if we do not take account of the coming year, farmers' incomes will not increase. That is hardly an example of budgetary control.

The level of stocks also gives rise to significant concern. No one could argue that we should continue to hold such massive stocks. I accept that we need to be self-sufficient and to have a buffer, but there can be no justification for holding such enormous stocks. Indeed, it has been a central part of policy to try to reduce them.

This year, 30 million tonnes of cereals will be in stock. That is a dramatic increase, despite a relatively poor harvest. There are also high stocks of beef, despite a very costly programme under which 1·1 million tonnes were exported. According to the Commission, beef stocks are now approaching 1·2 million tonnes, which is a record high. Stocks generally are now reaching record proportions, although, to be fair, stocks of butter and skimmed milk powder have fallen.

If we take account of the various scenarios being considered by the Commission, the impact of the proposals on cereals—the one area that could rightly be described as reformed—over five years could result in 1997-98 production being as high as 173 million tonnes. If that estimate is correct—I think that it is on the low side—that is only 7 million tonnes less than production in 1991-92. It is only a 4 per cent. reduction in cereal production despite measures which, on the Commission's own admission, will cost 5·6 billion ecu more than they cost in 1991.

Beef production is set to increase up to 1997 and the Commission expects a considerable rise in both surpluses and stocks.

Hon. Members have mentioned milk reform: they have mentioned the agreed cut in the quota of 1 per cent. in successive years from 1993 onwards. That has already been deferred. I suppose that the milk industry and the farmers will be pleased, but the position cannot be described as consistent. It cannot be consistent to agree a reduction of 3 per cent. over three years in May, and to change one's mind within months.

If I were a milk producer, I would say, "Hang on a second: if that can happen in a matter of months, they can change their minds again. How am I to plan for the future? How will my investment be affected? I do not know what is happening from one month to the next." The documents before us present an inherent threat of inconsistency, instability and short-termism.

Other hon. Members have mentioned Italy. I see no justification in agreeing—even in principle—to a 900,000 tonne increase in the Italian quota, even if such an increase is circumscribed by the conditions mentioned by the Minister. His faith in Italy is touching: he assured us that he would expect the Italians, as well as us, to fill in the forms to which other hon. Members have referred. I hope that that happens, but I cannot embrace that touching faith, given the Italians' record—particularly their record in regard to milk. The 900,000 tonne increase is unjustifiable, especially as neither the Minister nor anyone else has asked the question that I would ask. We are not self-sufficient in milk production; are we fighting for additional quotas for our producers?

It is no good saying that quota is useless because we cannot convert it into added-value goods. That is because, owing to our not having sufficient quota, we are closing down processing factories. We are in a vicious circle, but the Minister did not seem to recognise that.

Italy has never implemented the system, and I believe that this agreement defies even the most charitable logic. According to European Community officials, consumers—a group we all represent, but who are not mentioned in our debates as often as they should be—may benefit from a paltry 2 per cent. reduction in food prices in three years. Devaluation has put paid to that. Already the pressure on food prices is increasing, especially in the case of sugar.

The Court of Auditors usually delays judgment until after the event, but it has seen fit to comment on the so-called reforms before the event. It has said that the reforms are a bureaucratic nightmare and a recipe for fraud.

I see no real, long-term progress towards the objectives that are in the interests of agriculture, the consumer, the environment, budgetary control and a system that will lead us into the next century. There is no perceptible benefit for consumers; indeed, as I have said, devaluation has brought

about the opposite. As the documents demonstrate, the taxpayer will be asked to dig deeper into his pocket to fund additional expenditure, and fraud is certain to increase; indeed, I believe that the fraudsters are already doing their homework. Meanwhile a volatile, uncertain future remains for farmers, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Even according to the most favourable assumptions, this reform is designed not to eliminate but to mitigate the problems. There must be a will for such fundamental reform, and that demands a basic rethink. It is complacent in the extreme to base future policy on so-called reforms, as the Government motion proposes, and I hope that the House will support, in strength, the amendment in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition.

9.39 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): As usual in these annual CAP debates, the debate has been good natured. I do not wish to spoil the consensus, but I must take issue with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), who complained that the Government deserve no credit for the increased farm incomes which have resulted from sterling's departure from the exchange rate mechanism. Until black Wednesday, the official Opposition supported sterling's exchange rate in the ERM at DM2·95. Some Conservative Members called for devaluation and for sterling's exit from the ERM, which has had the beneficial effects that we now see and which is why most Conservative Members refer to it as golden Wednesday.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East overlooked the fact that the benefit of devaluation flowed to United Kingdom farmers only because of the reform of agri-monetary arrangements which my right hon. Friend the Minister negotiated. If we still had the nonsense of the green pound and monetary compensatory amounts, which used to characterise these debates, we would have been given much more meaty briefs from farmers. Thankfully, all that is past, thanks to my right hon. Friend's initiative and persistence.

The debate always enables us to look at where we have reached in the long process of CAP reform. Listening to my right hon. Friend the Minister at a Back-Bench meeting yesterday, I was musing about the complaints of farmers and others about the common agricultural policy: it is expensive, bureaucratic, open to fraud and, despite the cost, does not give adequate support to farmers. There is a lack of environmental safeguards and some member states do not play by the rules, about which we have heard much tonight. It discriminates against United Kingdom farmers, especially on the agri-monetary arrangements, to which I have referred; thankfully, it no longer does. It distorts world markets, encourages over-production and fails to encourage farmers to produce what the market wants.

Not surprisingly, many proposals for change have been made: that farmers need to produce for the market and that we need to reduce cost, direct support at the producer rather than at the intervention store, reform the green pound system, end discrimination, strengthen enforcement and limit production. There have been many arguments at the farmers' meetings that I have attended, not about whether we should have set-aside but about whether it should be voluntary or compulsory. We have heard much argument about the need to incorporate environmental safeguards.

We can take stock of several years of debate and argument about how all the changes should be achieved. We should also recognise that the hand of the European Commission was eventually forced by budgetary pressures —the need to keep the CAP within Budget. I remind the House that my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Thatcher campaigned repeatedly year after year on this point, and she deserves much credit for our current position in controlling the European Community budget.

I recall that for about three years we had a series of proposals from the European Commission, the central feature of which was discrimination against United Kingdom farmers. Despite what has been said tonight, it is still my view that, by and large, my right hon. Friend negotiated most of that discrimination out of the eventual package of measures which was agreed last year in the CAP reforms.

That is not to say that there are not protectionist pressures in other member states. Such pressures clearly exist, as can be seen in France at the moment. Nor does it mean that there will not be other member states of which it is valid to say that they are not complying with the regulations. Both those issues imply certain discrimination, but my right hon. Friend consistently refused to accept the discrimination that was central to the MacSharry reforms and he won the argument.

We should also remind the House that the package of reforms is not my right hon. Friend's package, but the European Commission's. The price fixing that we are debating follows on from that package. The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said that the set-aside policy was my right hon. Friend's policy, but that is not so. Over the past three or four years in these debates, I have heard my right hon. Friend say repeatedly that set-aside seems to be the only proposal that we have, and that we must argue with other member states that they must play by the rules. I do not think that he has ever stood at the Dispatch Box and said that such supply management was his preferred option. I do not believe that it is. I note from his reaction that he confirms what I say.

If we are to have a supply management package, there is bound to be a great deal of paperwork involved. That is the central problem. I have outlined some of the things that we have said are wrong with the CAP and some of the things that people say we should do, but some of those objectives militate against one another. The most obvious relates to bureaucracy. A supply management scheme cannot work without a great deal of paperwork.

I hope that my right hon. Friend is right. I know that he has put a great deal of effort into producing the forms so that farmers can understand them. I read the article in *The Daily Telegraph* to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred, but it did not appear to be too critical of what the Minister had done. It may have been critical of the fact that farmers will have to fill in forms, but if there is to be supply management there must be forms to fill in. I expect that in my constituency and those of other hon. Members there will be merry hell to pay initially, but I do not doubt that with the help of the farming unions we shall persuade farmers that it is not quite so bad as it seems, that the scheme can work and that if they do not fill in the forms and send them off by 15 May they will lose out financially.

[Mr. John Greenway]

I do not want to be churlish and break the spirit of our good-natured debate but I must take issue briefly with something else that the hon. Member for North Cornwall said. We are all worried to death that member states will not play by the rules, but it does not help one jot for us to say so in the House. We should take the opportunity to tell my right hon. Friend and the Minister of State, who has a lot of negotiating to do, that they have the House's support. If other member states do not play by the rules, every hon. Member should give the Ministers the support that they need to ensure that the reforms are properly implemented. The Commission should be forced to tell other member states that unless they fill in the forms and play by the rules they will not get the money. Unless we are really firm, the whole system will collapse, as some hon. Members have said.

I believe that farmers now recognise that reform of the agri-monetary system, coupled with the devaluation of the green pound, has had a profound effect on agricultural prices. That is extremely welcome and was much needed. Farm incomes have been at rock bottom for some time, with farmers struggling along hoping for better times. For the moment, to a degree, those better times have come —but I am not sure how long they will last. There are signs that sterling may revalue upwards a touch. There have been suggestions of that in the financial pages of the heavy press for some time. There may be some technical revaluation, which will immediately have the effect of reducing prices under the system. Cuts in support prices will therefore follow, but under the reforms there will be cuts in support prices anyway. I believe that from the year beginning 1 July cereal support prices will be cut by up to 25 per cent. That was the central thrust of the package; in time, it must have an effect on the market price and eventually on the price that the farmer gets.

There has been some adverse effect on food prices, but by and large that is overstated. We have heard some criticism tonight to the effect that food is expensive. I do not believe that it is. Over the past 14 or 15 years food price rises have generally been below the rate of inflation. If we take a longer-term view we find that it is not so much the price at the farm gate which affects the price of food in the shops as all the other pressures in the commercial world —pressures in the grocery trade and the retail trade, the cost of transporting food around the country, the cost of imported food, and so on—which have a much greater effect.

Tonight we must consider whether the proposed CAP reforms will have the desired effect. I have asked three questions. First, will they direct more money to the farmers? I think that they will, and that the new set-aside scheme—the cause of all those forms that farmers will have to fill in—will provide almost £1 billion in income for United Kingdom farmers in the year ahead, and nearly £1·5 billion for the year after that. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said in his opening speech that the United Kingdom's share of the common agricultural policy budget will increase from 7 to 9 per cent. That welcome 30 per cent. increase in money was much needed.

My second question is whether the reforms will reduce output. There is more reason to doubt whether they will have the effect that we want in terms of reducing output because farmers constantly strive for greater efficiency. Year on year, we have seen yields rising.

Thirdly, will the reforms encourage production for the market? I think that there will be some limited success there, especially when we see the impact of the fall in support prices central to the reform package.

We also need to consider other ways of helping farmers to become more market oriented. I greatly welcome my right hon. Friend's continuing commitment to helping with marketing grants to marketing schemes, in which farmers can effectively combine together to gain a little more power in the market place and to improve the quality and consistency of their products.

There is an important stumbling block, however. I still feel that consumers generally do not know enough about where their food comes from. I want to mention to my right hon. Friend an article which he may have seen and which appeared in *The Sun* yesterday. It is not just where the food comes from; it is what people drink as well—they do not know where that comes from. The article tells us that my right hon. Friend

"pushed a bottle of the famous spring Perrier water out of his sight after finding it in front of him at a London conference. Mr. Gummer said, 'Perrier fizzy water is not as good as those produced in the UK.' A *Sun* survey agreed."

The best is yet to come—just remember that bit about the United Kingdom.

"Here are three brands that are TWICE as nice and only HALF the price—Strathmore . . . Buxton . . . and Evian". That is one for a "Tell me another" book, I am sure, but it makes me think that we need to do a lot more to inform the consumer, the housewife and the busy shopper where the food that they are buying is produced. We have nothing to fear in the United Kingdom across our agriculture sector in marketing British products wherever we can.

I would like to mention three specific issues to my right hon. Friend. First, the beef special premium scheme is exceedingly unpopular in my Ryedale constituency and I dare say that it is unpopular in other hon. Members' constituencies. I have been in the House since the debate began and I am surprised to find that I am the first hon. Member to mention it. Auctioneers and farmers in my area tell me that they will have grave difficulty making it work. I implore my right hon. Friend to be as flexible and helpful as he can. I am sure that he will be as I know that he is concerned particularly about the beef sector, especially in relation to the continuing fall in demand for red meat. Even Dr. Peel, following my three yearly medical check-up here in the House, advised me to eat less red meat. I am not sure that I shall take much notice as I enjoy beef and Yorkshire lamb, but it is advice that I suspect that many doctors are giving to other people, too.

I should like also to mention the linseed regime. The decision to drop set-aside for linseed was very welcome, but some United Kingdom growers have planted or are ready to plant on land which has now been declared ineligible for arable crops because it was outside the arable rotation at the end of 1991. I find this very difficult, but I have one young farmer who is a new entrant and who spent £1,500 on the seed. He was all ready to go and has now been told that because of the change in the rules he cannot have the money. Because of the support for linseed, what he would get for it on the market will not make the exercise worth while. I understand that within the linseed

regime there is still a deficit across the Community. That in itself suggests that more support might be justified and that we need perhaps to re-examine that.

Thirdly, I want to mention sugar. There is as yet no proposal from the Community, but my right hon. Friend knows the great importance of the sugar crop to farmers in the vale of York, around Malton and in the vale of Pickering. When it comes to arguing in Brussels, as I know that he will with all the power and strength at his disposal, will he please bear in mind that we produce about 50 per cent. of our sugar needs in the United Kingdom on United Kingdom farms? That suggests that we should not suffer sizeable quota cuts. This crop has helped to sustain many farms in my constituency through some difficult times in recent years.

This year's price proposals carry forward the process of reform agreed last year. The CAP is far from perfect. We all have our doubts about its future and more reforms seem inevitable to many of us. Two crucial points matter: first, we must keep within budget; secondly, there must be no discrimination against United Kingdom farmers.

9.59 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Many hon. Members have referred to the fact that agriculture is a vital part of the rural economy and I do not contradict them. However, west Wales and especially the county of Dyfed comprise an area which, by the EC's own data, could be considered as having the same problems as Portugal, Greece and Ireland, because it has only 76 per cent. of the average per capita income of the EC and thus would qualify for objective 1 status. Unfortunately, that is not a possibility because of its population size, although the statistics on income would merit that status. For an area such as west Wales, which is so dependent on agriculture, any changes will have a significant effect.

I am worried about compulsory set-aside, about the reduction in cereal support in Wales compared to the reduction in England, and about the hill livestock compensatory allowances, which we debated a few weeks ago. My farmers do not believe any of the figures given by the Minister. I am also worried about the fact that, even after the 1984 imposition of milk quotas, Britain remains at an enormous disadvantage compared with many other European countries.

As a member of the Committee on the Agriculture Bill, I had an interesting meeting yesterday with representatives from Unigate, which runs the creamery in my constituency. The representatives made the point forcefully that Unigate, as a major producer of cheese, wanted to purchase at least another 20 per cent. of milk in my constituency. Unigate cannot do so because of the quotas and, as a major British food manufacturing company, it is extremely annoyed to see on supermarket shelves significant amounts of cheese imported from Ireland, from EC countries and from Canada.

It is important, when considering the reforms, to address the issue of income for our rural areas. Conservative Members have almost congratulated the Minister on the effects of black Wednesday. It is rather peculiar for policy to appear to be set by accident rather than by design. It is a bit rich for Conservative Members to tell us that they had been calling for devaluation before September. I do not recall hearing such voices on Conservative Benches. I have never believed that we should have supported the benchmark of DM2·95 to the pound.

The current levels of surplus in storage, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) referred, and the cost of maintaining those surpluses, are robbing the rural community. On current levels, only £3 out of every £10 of expenditure on the CAP goes to the farmers. A significant proportion of the remaining £7 is wasted in storage costs, intervention costs and export subsidies. That issue must be addressed fundamentally if there is to be a significant improvement in the CAP regime generally.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) let the cat out of the bag when he indicated that he sees set-aside as a means of increasing farm incomes, while admitting that it is highly unlikely to reduce production. If that is the case, why on earth have it? Why should British cereal producers be told, in effect, that they will have to set aside 15 per cent. of their land if this is to have no effect on surpluses? For the reasons that I gave earlier, I hope that it will have some effect. In the long run, farmers are robbed of income.

It is rather worrying that, in a debate of this nature, which many Conservative Members have described as important, there are no representatives of the Scottish Office or the Welsh Office on the Government Front Bench to reply to points relating to Scotland and Wales.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Nor is there a representative of the Northern Ireland Office.

Mr. Ainger: I accept the right hon. Gentleman's point. I do not know the reason for the absence of such representatives. Perhaps Ministers have business elsewhere. Agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy in Wales, and we have significant numbers of people employed in the food industry generally. That being the case, it is strange that no Welsh Office Minister could be bothered to come along to what is a relatively rare debate.

Mr. Gummer: Given that agriculture is so basic in Wales and that there are more than 25 Welsh Labour Members of Parliament, perhaps the hon. Gentleman can tell us why he is the only one who has bothered to turn up. I exclude the Whip, who has to be here as he is on duty.

Mr. Ainger: I do not have to defend my position, and I certainly do not have to defend the position of my Labour colleagues.

It is also significant that not one representative of the Welsh National party is present, despite the fact that all Welsh nationalist Members represent rural constituencies. I admit that, in one respect, I am unusual. However, I like to think that I represent a trend—Labour Members from Welsh rural constituencies.

With regard to set-aside, the farmers of my constituency say that it is far better to use land productively—not for food production, but for industrial production—than to abandon it to weeds and brush, in which small partridges can find nesting places. This is a matter to which the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) referred. The National Farmers Union branch in Haverfordwest has considered in great detail the option of producing rapeseed oil on set-aside land, perhaps taking

[Mr. Ainger]

over land used for cereal production, in the hope that the Government will recognise the importance of bio fuels, which are environmentally friendly.

The energy technology support unit has estimated that, if all the United Kingdom's 1992 set-aside land were turned over to the growing of rapeseed, 743,000 tonnes of fuel could be produced. That would replace more than 600,000 tonnes of conventional, mineral-based diesel. The effect of that on the environment would be a 3·5 per cent. cut in carbon dioxide emissions. Not only is that a way of increasing incomes in the rural economy and of making good productive use of land without adding to the surpluses, but it also assists by cleaning up the environment and reducing the problem of global warming.

Among the many disappointments in the Chancellor's Budget speech was the lost opportunity to assist the farming industry in a move to industrial crops. Under the current EC regime, pilot schemes for such crops receive a specific tax benefit. It was unfortunate that the Chancellor missed that opportunity. I understand that, in a new directive, the EC tax Commissioner is proposing the possibility of a 90 per cent. reduction in duty on biodiesel. If that is true, it is welcome, and I hope that the Government will push for it in negotiations in Brussels.

Instead of setting land aside and reducing farming incomes, and thereby further reducing prosperity in our rural economy, it is a great shame that that opportunity is being missed. Following the Rio summit, it has been acknowledged that all countries should take steps significantly to reduce carbon dioxide production. By moving to far more environmentally friendly fuels such as biodiesel, we could at a stroke solve some of our problems in relation to global warming, and also add value to land that is currently set aside.

It is extremely worrying to hear constant assurances from Conservative Members that the deal has overall been a good one. They rightly admit that the increases that have stemmed from the package, although small, are from a low base. As I have said, the rural economy in my constituency is in a crisis that is linked to other problems, such as the closure of Ministry of Defence bases.

It is no good the Government saying that they are trying to reduce the effects of the CAP, when at the same time they are reducing incomes in the rural economy. Ultimately, the taxpayer will have to pick up the bill in one way or another. It is important to try to reduce our surpluses significantly. When the Minister responds, I hope that he will refer to biodiesel and to biofuels, as they are a far better way of using productive land than producing weeds.

10.13 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Madam Speaker, I hesitated before rising as I was hearing some most useful technical information from behind when you called my name. However, I am very grateful to you for calling me. I am also grateful for the fact that I have passed the magical witching hour of 10 pm. I would not have liked to foul up the 10 o'clock rule, so that I was responsible for keeping my hon. Friends here all night listening to me. That would have been most unfortunate.

I will be extremely brief. However, this is a very important debate. We are talking about the third largest industry in the country, after the combined chemical industries and the North sea oil industry. This subject affects all our constituents, because they are all consumers. It also intimately affects the performance of our economy. Although it is such a large industry, we have a £5·5 billion deficit in the food and drink section. It is therefore vital that we promote policies which boost the performance of that industry. That is why I welcome the new Agriculture Bill, for in the potato and milk sectors we shall have the opportunity to compete on equal terms in an unrestricted way and add value in both sectors.

I thank my right hon. Friend for writing to me in the past week announcing the new Cotswolds environmentally sensitive area. It is part of his new agri-environmental package amounting to £31 million, with an extra £12 million for the six new environmentally sensitive areas. My farmers in Cirencester and Tewkesbury and in the Cotswolds will be grateful for his action, and will grasp the opportunity with alacrity. I quote my right hon. Friend's description of the Cotswold hills, because it sums up my constituency beautifully

> "The Cotswold hills are an outstanding example of limestone scenery. The area is dominated by steep escarpment rising dramatically from the vales of Berkeley, Gloucestershire and Evesham."

[Interruption.] I suggest to some of my hon. Friends who are conducting conversations that, if they listened more and came to my constituency, tourism might benefit considerably.

The many hours that my right hon. Friend and the Minister of State spend in Brussels trying to negotiate a satisfactory reform of the CAP must be frustrating in the extreme. I assure them that I am aware of the hours, days and nights that they spend there trying to produce a suitable package, only to return here to be greeted with carping criticism, more carping and more criticism, from Opposition Members who never produce any positive proposals of their own.

The package that the Minister managed eventually to negotiate, contrary to the original prediction that Ray MacSharry would sell us all down the river and that our farmers would be put out of business, represents a considerable step forward. In the current economic climate, with GATT not having been renegotiated and the CAP in the middle of renegotiation, no Minister or farmer can be certain what the future holds.

I am delighted that the socialist Government of France have been chucked out. They were unreliable and useless. I hope that the incoming Prime Minister, Mr. Balladur, and his Ministers will not seek to revisit the agricultural part of the GATT negotiations. If they do, the whole thing will unravel and we shall not stand a chance of securing the Uruguay round.

I remind the House that not only the farmers of the western civilised economies benefit from the GATT round —*[Interruption.]* I urge Opposition Members to listen to me more carefully. Instead of being critical, they should listen and learn. Those who benefit most from the conclusion of any GATT round are the poor countries of the third world. They desperately need to trade their produce. If trade barriers are erected against them, they will continue to remain poor and rely on overseas aid. I am all for trade with the third world and want open and free trade to remain the order of the day for as long as possible.

The shift in support from the processor to the producer is an important part of the reform. Much has been said about CAP money merely going to producers and lining the pockets of skilful entrepreneurs instead of going to the farmers, the primary producers, who need the aid. Support is best given in that way, for four reasons. First, we need to target the huge amount of money that will be given out under the CAP. We can target it to produce benefits that the public really want, environmentally friendly farming systems and more organic farming. Organic farming is not the panacea that many environmental organisations would claim, but at least it has a place. Any mechanisms that my right hon. Friend can negotiate under the CAP reforms to encourage it must be of benefit to the general public, and particularly to those who want to buy organically produced goods. An increasing number of consumers want such goods.

Secondly, it has been possible to produce a Communitywide scheme. In my intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), I made the point that a Communitywide scheme would cut out fraud. It does not behove any hon. Member to say, "Why have we got this scheme, when the Italians, the Greeks, the Portuguese and the Irish will not enforce it?" My right hon. Friend should go to Brussels with all guns blazing and produce a scheme which everybody will enforce. It we enforce a scheme and others do not, we will become less and less competitive. I shall come back to anti-fraud measures.

Thirdly, contrary to all the rumours and predictions about what Ray MacSharry would inflict on us, the package has not discriminated against our large farmers. There were scare stories about them being penalised, but there will still be a level playing field. That was a significant achievement by my right hon. Friend.

Fourthly, the package is particularly advantageous to the United Kingdom, because it will increase our proportion of the CAP budget from 7 per cent. to 9 per cent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said, that represents a 30 per cent. increase. There will be an additional £1 billion this year and an additional £1·5 billion next year. These are important extra funds which my right hon. Friend has managed to negotiate for our farmers.

On the enforcement aspect of the package, as hon. Members will be aware, part of the package is the production of a new, integrated administrative control system. If I achieve one thing in the debate, it is to say to farmers that, if they do not fill in the forms by 15 May, they will not get the money to which they are entitled.

The package is not complicated. I have read all 80 pages which accompany it. The booklet is fairly readable for those who take time to peruse it. Much information is needed to fill in the forms. No doubt we will get many letters from our constituent farmers in the next few weeks about the forms. Farmers should sit down and read the booklet. It is not complicated: my right hon. Friend and his civil servants have done a good job in making it as simple as possible.

I do not believe that it is beyond the capability of most farmers to fill in the forms correctly. I stress that they should get on with it as soon as possible. As my right hon. Friend said, they have to lodge an application to the Ordnance Survey to be sure of getting the maps. The date of 15 April is not far hence. Therefore, the loud and clear message to all farmers is that they should get the maps and get their forms into my right hon. Friend's divisional offices. If the forms are submitted in good time, officials will have a chance to look at them and send them back if they are wrong. If farmers submit their applications on 15 May, the deadline, there will be no time for the Department to send them back. I urge farmers to fill in the forms correctly. The message is that they should fill in the forms if they want the money. As my right hon. Friend said, an important point about the forms is that similar requirements will be produced for the other 11 member states.

The committee which will be responsible for implementing the system will be able to scrutinise the forms after 15 May. It will be able to scrutinise and demand production of the forms of individual properties of farmers in the member states to see whether they have been filled in properly. All sorts of new enforcement-checking measures, including aerial photography, will be available. It will be easy for us to demand that aerial photographs be taken of areas of Greece, Portugal and Spain to see whether farmers in those countries have completed the forms and whether the aggregate figures on the forms confirm the totals which one is able to glean from the photographs. The age of compliance is upon farmers in all the member states.

An important part of Maastricht is the new increased powers provided for the Court of Auditors. We have been told that the common agricultural policy budget this year will be 34 billion ecu. I do not want my taxpayers' money to go to Spanish, Portuguese, German or any other farmers if it does not go to the people who are entitled to it. As a British taxpayer and a British farmer, I want to see enforcement across the Community, and I will be urging my right hon. Friend every step of the way to ensure that that happens.

We all want security in the future for our farmers. For the past 15 to 20 years, farmers have been telling us that that is absolutely paramount. However, it is difficult, especially with the new Democratic Administration in the United States. I was in the United States before Christmas, and there is no doubt that those Democratic senators whom Labour Members so revere are increasingly protectionist. They do not want to see a GATT agreement or the north American free trade agreement: they want protectionism.

For all the reasons which I gave earlier, it is absolutely essential for the United Kingdom—where 40 per cent. of our total gross domestic product is exported—that we have as free and fair trade across the world as we can possibly manage. I repeat loud and clear my earlier comments: I hope that no EC Government will want to renegotiate the agricultural part of GATT. It will be difficult enough to get the textile, steel and various other parts of GATT negotiated. I hope that Labour Members will welcome the motion and support it in every possible way.

My right hon. Friend has worked extremely hard to get a fair package for our farmers. The package will give them a thoroughly good deal in the current economic circumstances provided by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, of low inflation, no unit wage cost increases at all this year and low interest rates. Those are precisely the conditions which farmers and all businesses need to succeed in the United Kingdom. They now have the opportunity. They should reduce their debts, accelerate

[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]

their investment programmes and make hay while the sun shines, because things may not be quite as rosy in the future.

I hope that Labour Members will welcome what my right hon. Friend has achieved. When I explain my comments to constituent farmers up and down the country, they will realise that this Conservative Government have treated them as well as could possibly be done in the circumstances by any Minister negotiating for us in Brussels.

10.28 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I shall be brief, not least because I was, unfortunately, not able to be in my place for the earlier part of the debate, for which I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Minister and to other hon. Members.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State was kind enough to meet Buckinghamshire farmers recently. Many issues were discussed, and he produced a persuasive and useful performance, not least on the potato issue. Buckinghamshire farmers are grateful to my hon. Friend.

I shall not say that my right hon.Friend the Minister is said by the farmers in my constituency to be doing a good job; they have not said that. I judge from the relative lack of complaints that he is doing a brilliant job. Nowadays, I do not hear so often the traditional complaints. Instead, I am told about bureaucracy and petty controls. Time and again, individual farmers and the National Farmers Union, at group meetings in my constituency, produce the most mind-boggling examples of ever-increasing bureaucracy.

Despite what has been said about the integrated support system, a farmer who is engaged in small or medium mixed farming is almost overwhelmed with form filling. My hon. Friend the Minister of State will remember that the matter was raised when he met Buckinghamshire farmers. If it is conceivable, I ask him at Brussels to find ways of reducing the bureaucracy that is being imposed on farmers, and especially those who run small and medium farms.

The Government are right to say that farming incomes have increased considerably—22 per cent. is quoted. However, farmers are hard-headed people, and after being a Member for about a year I stopped trying to soft-soap them in any way. Nowadays, we tend to talk rather more realistically, and it seems that there are three realistic things that have to be said about farming in future.

First, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) was right to say that we should not make too much of the improvement in farm incomes, which has come fortuitously through the revaluation of the pound. But how far can we base the future of the industry on devaluation? I think that my doubts are felt generally by those who are engaged in agriculture.

My hunch is that, over the next few months, the French Government will decide that they cannot sustain the power of the franc and will find a way to devalue it. Leaving aside what will happen to the exchange rate mechanism, that will have a damaging effect on the United Kingdom. We shall find that we are engaged in competitive devaluation. Farmers had a good year last year, and things may not be too bad this year, but we must be realistic. It must be accepted, however, that the way forward for us and the French is not competitive devaluation.

Secondly, there is the general agreement on tariffs and trade. It is not popular to say this—for that reason, I shall say it—but the French have a point on GATT. Perhaps that is a terrible thing to say, but it is true. It is not by chance that all French political parties feel constrained to support the farmers. It is because the social structure of France is entirely different from that of the United Kingdom. Agriculture in France is crucial for the viability of many small towns, as well as for individual farmers. Enormous numbers of people live in small towns, rather than the huge and anonymous areas of suburbia in the United Kingdom. That is a fact of life.

Political pressures in France, whether we welcome them or not, to take a tough line on the GATT will not go away. We might as well reconcile ourselves to a tough struggle. The French will be pretty hard-line after their election, and we know the presidential election is due in two years. We do not make life easier for ourselves by denouncing the French as self-seeking or as wreckers. There are strong social and political pressures, and the French Government, whatever complexion they may have, will react to them. If we do not take account of that reality, we shall make life difficult for ourselves. When I talk to farmers, I find that they recognise that reality perfectly, because they are in the same business. So let us be realistic about that.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister understands that, in the long term, British and western European agriculture has not even started to face difficulties. We shall face increasing competition from eastern Europe. Only the artificial sterilising effect of communism has stopped us facing that competition in the past. People in eastern Europe and Russia are not congenitally unable to produce things: it is only that their political system has prevented them from doing so. So, one of these years, they will start growing and exporting things.

If western Europe wants to export industrial products to former communist countries, it will have to come to some accommodation with them. I shall not go into that now, but my local farmers and undoubtedly the farmers in my hon. Friends' constituencies are perfectly aware that the troubles of British agriculture are not over. They know that geographical—and, if you like, historical—pressures will come to bear on them.

Diversification will be the name of the game in future, as it has been in the past few years. That is not new to my hon. Friend the Minister, but, while respecting all the environmental desiderata, we need realism in the planning regime if farmers are to be kept in business.

Agricultural Prices

10.35 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): This has been a wide-ranging and important debate. It is an opportunity to discuss the common agricultural policy, which is of major significance to the people of Britain, given the enormous amounts of money that they contribute. The fact that hon. Members on both sides of the House have raised serious and important issues demonstrates that people's attention is directed towards the CAP.

I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). It is not carping to express some reservations about the operation of the CAP, given the problems with it. We are still saddled with a Frankenstein's monster. It is hugely expensive. It is inefficient. It is damaging to world trade. It traps farmers into growing simply for subsidies, not to meet market demands. Almost every hon. Member would accept that that is the fundamental weakness of a system of the nature of the CAP. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) said in his excellent speech, even though the purpose of the CAP reforms was to bring the budget under control, the cost is still spiralling.

The debate is an opportunity to evaluate the reforms of May 1992. The Opposition are entitled to criticise certain aspects of the review. When the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced the reform, he was treated as a hero coming back from some battle abroad. One was surprised that some of his Back-Bench Members did not throw down rose petals and offer him a laurel crown. We should evaluate just what was achieved in May 1992, whether the reform of the CAP has been the great success that was claimed by the Minister and whether it will meet the objectives that were laid out then.

I remind the House that the Minister said last year that the reforms would cut £8 billion off the CAP budget. At the time the Labour party expressed some doubt about that. I still express doubt about it, given what we have heard today about the problems of controlling the CAP budget. There is also the question whether the reforms have helped all our farmers, as some people have claimed.

Like other hon. Members, I attended a conference of small farmers today. The Minister was present. It was a pity that he did not share the platform with me and other parliamentarians, as was originally promised and was on the agenda. Those small farmers made it clear that they did not believe that the CAP would work to their advantage as it has been reformed. I am sure that they made their views known to the Minister when he addressed them this afternoon.

We need to consider the attitude of the incoming French Government to the CAP. The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) made some pertinent and sensible points about that. The French Government are not sending the right signals to either their farmers or their fishermen by suggesting that they can renegotiate GATT and CAP agreements. I hope that the Minister will make it clear to the French Government that that does not set a good example to their farmers and fishermen, who now think that they can ignore bilateral agreements made in good faith.

At the heart of last year's reforms is compulsory set-aside. I shall concentrate the majority of my remarks on that and on the agri-environmental programme. Both are important areas that need reform. Although we have made valid criticisms of the agreement, I also want to make some suggestions, which I hope the Minister will think are constructive.

Set-aside was advocated by the Government even before the MacSharry proposals. It was introduced in Britain on a voluntary basis in 1988. I believe it to be a negative way to use large sums of public money and a number of hon. Members have clearly stated that they share that view. In its current form, the benefit of cutting production is doubtful. Like the previous system, the scheme benefits large farms—the larger the farm, the greater the benefit. Indeed, a report in *The Sunday Times* suggests that at least one landowner is receiving an income of £30,000 a year for putting his land into the voluntary set-aside scheme. Taxpayers and owners of small businesses will want to question whether that is good value for public money and whether the scheme actually provides worthwhile benefits.

The new scheme is virtually compulsory for larger farms, which must put 15 per cent. of their cereal production land into set-aside. In crude terms, the potential of that is enormous: 1·5 million acres, which is an area the size of Lincolnshire, being put into set-aside. The package of set-aside payments—the compensation that farmers can claim if they meet the targets—has increased CAP costs by 5 billion ecus, which at current prices is £3·5 billion. How can that help to achieve the target of reducing CAP costs by £8 billion?

So far, even the curbing of production—the very principle underlying set-aside—has not been that successful. Cereal production has actually risen since 1988, when the voluntary scheme was introduced. According to MAFF's figures, in 1988 some 21·1 million tonnes were produced; by 1991 that had increased to 22·6 million tonnes; and even in 1992 the figure was 21·1 million tonnes —the same as 1988—despite the fact that it was a wet year, which affected production.

I am sure that farmers would agree that set-aside is a public relations disaster for them. A Friends of the Earth publication "Set-aside: money for nothing" quoted a Northumberland farmer, Mr. Adam Harrison, as saying:

> "If the object of the exercise had been to make farmers look feather-bedded, parasitic, corrupt and incompetent, then the new-look CAP could hardly have been bettered."

Those are strong words, but farmers in my constituency tell me that they are concerned about the way in which set-aside is used and about the image that it reflects on them.

Set-aside has also cost jobs. Research by the Centre for Agricultural Studies shows that a full-time job is lost for every 130 hectares set aside. Moreover, under the present scheme the environmental benefits of set-aside are extremely doubtful. It is certainly not a return to the old system of rotation in the modern agricultural system; it means that production is intensified in the parts of farmland that are not set aside. Some of the more sensible uses of set-aside have not been encouraged.

I echo the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) about biofuels. I do not think that the recent Budget helped to encourage their use, although it surely gave the Chancellor an opportunity to provide some tax encouragement. At present, biodiesel is treated in

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

exactly the same way as ordinary diesel in terms of duty. Rather than allowing fields to be set aside, doing nothing, the Government could encourage biofuel production—not only in the context of oilseed, but in the context of fast-growing coppice, which can be cropped and used for biofuel. That was not encouraged in the Budget; nor has it been encouraged in provision for research and development.

This morning I attended a conference with small farmers. It emerged very strongly that they feel betrayed in relation to research and development. Organisations such as ADAS—a useful organisation with a proud track record—are being turned, more or less, into private consultancies. Many small farmers simply cannot afford the assistance provided by such consultancies. If we are to encourage a more constructive use of set-aside—biofuels are just one example; there are one or two others—both ADAS and the Government have important roles to play.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with what the Select Committee on the Environment said this week? The Committee said that it was extremely important for forestry to have its proper place in set-aside and that permanent set-aside—as it comes to be discussed by the European Commission—included the possibility of long-term planning for extra forestry in this country and elsewhere, involving all sorts of environmental benefits, both global and national.

Mr. Morley: I acknowledge that, and I pay tribute to the Select Committee's report. I thought that it made a useful contribution to this issue and, indeed, to forestry in general. I will go further and commend to the Minister the recent report of the Countryside Commission, which has also considered farm forestry and the expansion of forests. Our country has one of the lowest levels of afforestation in Europe and set-aside certainly provides opportunities in that regard—particularly in the agri-environmental package, to which I shall refer later.

We need a major reform of the common agricultural policy. We need to sweep away as many forms of production and intervention support as possible, along with all the bureaucracy that goes with them. United Kingdom farmers are efficient; they can stand up for themselves and compete, as long as they are given a level playing field. The massive sums involved in the CAP should be shifted towards environmental support and away from production support—and, if necessary, towards social support, so that people can be maintained on the land. We should ensure that small farmers are supported and rural communities and their social fabric are protected.

The Minister may well refer to the advantages of the agri-environmental package and to measures that the Government have introduced—for instance, environmentally sensitive areas, countryside stewardship schemes and naturally sensitive area schemes. I shall not be churlish; those schemes are very welcome. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East pointed out, they have long been Labour party policy and we argued for them long before they were fashionable. However, all those measures —welcome though they are—must be seen in the context of the huge spending involved in the CAP. They are tiny in comparison with the money directed towards them.

As we said earlier, diversification will become increasingly important. I accept that; I also accept that we need an integrated approach to rural policy. Diversification need not go against present planning laws, but the number of applications for golf courses shows that certain forms of diversification can go too far. I have nothing against golf courses, which sometimes are a useful form of diversification, but the number of applications for golf courses in, for example, the Sevenoaks area makes one wonder where all the golfers will come from and who the proposed courses are for, because they cannot be for the benefit of local people. At the current rate of applications in the Kent area, there will be one golf course for each Kent resident.

I recently visited Kent and was accompanied by the excellent Labour councillor, Sarah Goodall, who showed me around the area and drew my attention to the problem. A balance needs to be struck, and I hope that the Minister will issue guidance to local authorities in this respect.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I live in the middle of a golf course in Kent—it has been built around me—for which there is a considerable waiting list. The demand to play golf in Kent seems insatiable.

Mr. Morley: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is saying that it is so insatiable that everyone will live in the middle of a golf course, because some people might object to how that affects the traditional countryside in Kent. Although there is a role for golf courses in diversification, a balance must be struck.

The Minister recently announced a number of proposals, the first of which was the extension of ESAs, which is very welcome. Secondly, there is the moorland scheme to reduce grazing and, thirdly, the meadowland scheme to create public access and a review of set-aside management, which will include wildlife corridors on margins and watersides and specialist options, which I presume would involve conservation headlands.

All those measures are welcome, but if the Minister is proposing to use public money to negotiate public access, to which I do not object, I hope that he is not agreeing with the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who was talking about charging for public access. If taxpayers' money is used for such a scheme, the public will contribute twice. Although it is a legitimate use of taxpayers' money, I do not think that the public should pay twice. I hope that the Minister is not contemplating such a payment, which could be regarded as a stroll tax on using the countryside.

If the Minister is reviewing set-aside management as part of the agri-environmental package, will he argue for the use of light grazing on set-aside land, which currently is banned, as a conservation measure to control meadows? I believe that such use is proper and I hope that he will raise that point with the Commission.

The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) mentioned the dates for mowing set-aside land and the effect that that has on ground-nesting species. That important point was well made.

I note that the habitat improvement scheme, which is linked to water margins, includes coastlines. Is that part of the planned retreat concept that the Minister has discussed, although it is not spelt out in the package? Nevertheless, it is welcome and useful.

Proposals have been made to assist organic farming. I hope that the Minister notes the comments of the Soil

Association and the SAFE—Sustainable Agriculture Food and Environment—alliance, which argue that existing organic farmers—those who have made an investment—should receive some support.

Those are the suggestions that the Minister has made. We believe that that is exactly the kind of policy that we want to see.

We part company with the Minister, however, over the fact that the total finance for the agri-environmental package comes to a measly £19 million over three years, taking away the ESA element. The Community's budget for the agri-environmental package is less than 1 per cent. of the CAP budget. I do not believe that environmental issues will be given a high priority when only 1 per cent. of the CAP budget is being devoted to them. That pales into insignificance when compared with the £2 billion which the United Kingdom will spend on the CAP.

It is no wonder that the Council for the Protection of Rural England said of the scheme in its press release "MAFF Misses Target" that

"serious funding has not been attached to it".

Although the Country Landowners Association welcomes the measures, in a press release that hon. Members will have seen, it said that the funding was totally inadequate.

With reference to moving to a more sophisticated range of measures, I commend to the Minister the CPRE document "Green or Mean", which outlines an extremely constructive method of using the agri-environmental package and reforming the CAP as we would wish.

The House of Lords Select Committee on European Communities produced a report entitled "The Environmental Aspects of the Reform of the CAP". It included a detailed set of environmental measures as an alternative to the set-aside proposals which are currently the heart of the CAP package. I took special note of the following comment:

"The Committee supports the call for payments to be made to farmers for delivering positive environmental benefits rather than doing environmental mischief. We favour payments for achieving certain pre-determined targets."

I noted the Minister's opening remark that he favoured cross-compliance and wanted to target environmental support. I very much welcome that, but it is important that any shift of CAP funding to environmental support for agriculture is not used to pay farmers to stop doing what they should be doing in the first place. Payment should be made for improvements in countryside and environmental management.

As yet, there is no evidence that environmental measures are at the heart of the CAP. When the Minister returned from Brussels last year, he said that environmental measures were at the heart of the CAP but, as I have said, only 1 per cent. of the budget and a measly £19 million over three years are being devoted to such measures. At present, the CAP is a wasteful system which distorts markets. There needs to be a complete change. Environmental changes should be an integral part of the CAP and should not be regarded as a bolt-on extra as they are now.

We want a comprehensive and integrated approach to rural issues, which notes not only the cultural and social values of farming but the rural infrastructure of which the Government should take account. There should be proper rural transport, affordable rented homes, job and training opportunities and support for small village schools, shops and sub-post offices. Many of the latter are threatened by privatisation, which will not help rural communities.

We want clear objectives for support payments and a proper evaluation of the schemes that have been introduced. We welcome the identification of ESAs, which we regard as the way forward, but the money must be spent wisely. We want a rethink on the set-aside policy as it forms the basis of the CAP package.

We hope that the Government will recognise that there is now an opportunity to assist and stabilise agriculture, to protect and enhance our environment and to bring the benefits to all people, whether they live in urban or rural areas. We are currently spending a great deal of money on a wasteful and destructive system. The Opposition believe that people in this country, including farmers, are entitled to a better deal than the one that they are getting under the CAP.

We believe that we have to move in the direction suggested by the agri-environmental package and we want the CAP to be completely restructured. I do not say that that can be done overnight, or that it will be easy to negotiate with other countries to achieve it. But I believe that there is widespread support for such action across all European member states and certainly among the people of this country, whether they live in villages, towns, cities or hamlets. If the Government really believe that environmental measures should be at the heart of the CAP, they should demonstrate that by arguing for such restructuring and certainly by devoting more than a measly and inadequate £19 million over three years to it.

10.59 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): I shall begin with one piece of arithmetic that is essential in discussing what happens with the CAP in Brussels. There are 76 votes in the Council of Ministers, and a qualified majority consists of 54 votes. Even if one is the archangel Gabriel—my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is probably closer to the archangel Gabriel than is any other member of the Council—if one does not get 54 votes one does not get one's policy adopted. So it is no earthly use Uncle Tom Cobbley and all telling us what they will do, how they will do it, and what they will insist on; if they do not get 54 votes, that is all words, words and nothing but words.

I know that this is all most offensive to the Opposition, but the fact of the matter is that that my right hon. Friend came back with a triumph for Britain. The MacSharry proposals had to be our starting point. And what were those proposals? They were a massive piece of institutionalised discrimination against British farmers—and we wiped them out. The Opposition said that we could not do it, and of course they did not want us to do it, because that would be inconvenient for them, but we delivered on what we had promised and the farming community knows that we did.

Mr. Morley: If the Minister has delivered what he promised, will he tell us whether the £8 billion will be cut from the CAP budget?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely innumerate. There has been a major switch in the CAP from commodity support to direct support. That is what

[Mr. Curry]

the hon. Gentleman says that he favours, because that is what his amendment says. There is a switch in support to budgetary cost from economic cost. The gain to the consumers is the gain in total economic transfers, not a gain in budgetary costs. We have said that from the start. That is at the heart of any policy designed to switch support from the commodity. To switch support to direct income aid and support to farmers will show up in enhanced budgetary costs, because to do so reduces the economic transfers at the heart of the income switches within the system.

There have been changes in the Council. Many hon. Members have referred to the new French Government. My right hon. Friend is now the doyen of the Agriculture Council. After only three and a half years we are on our fourth French Minister, there have been three or four Irish Ministers, and I believe that the Italians have reached number five. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) will be glad to hear that Alfredo Diana, a former colleague of ours in the European Parliament, is now the Italian Minister of Agriculture. He has a significant stake in the Italian buffalo herd, so no doubt that will give the Opposition something else to complain about. The number of Greeks has been beyond count, on immediate recollection. If we have done so badly, it is amazing that we are still there and all the others have gone. I believe that we are still here because we have delivered.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) talked about GATT. It is amazing how such talk is usually framed in terms of what Europe has to do to deliver. It takes two to tango on the GATT, and we have to hear from the United States, too. We have to hear that the Americans wish to renew their fast track authority, and that the Blair house agreement remains the foundation for the agreement on agriculture. The simple fact is that we shall not see a major departure from that agreement constitute the basis for an agreement on agriculture. Many other sectors have to be dealt with, too.

Let me answer directly what my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives said about national aid to France and to the sheepmeat sector. May I ask him if he would put these figures into the equation? I am talking now about exports of British products to France, and about live sheep. In 1991 they were up by 48 per cent. over 1990. In 1992 they were up by 63 per cent. over 1991. On sheepmeat, they were up by 36 per cent. in 1992 over 1991. In other words, we are capturing that French market. We are successful in that market. Then look at the help for British producers. Of course the devaluation helped us on our way—we do not pretend that that is not the case—but it is there and it is real, and if we had not negotiated the end of the monetary compensatory amount system that would not have come through in the benefits for farmers. It is clear what we have achieved.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Devaluation is an indicator of a policy failure.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is saying that the devaluation was an indication of the reverse of Government policy. What I am saying is that, as far as that affects farmers, unless we had abolished the MCA system, we would have had what existed when Labour was in power—a massive green pound gap and farmers denied the benefit of that. We have brought that to an end.

Mr. Stevenson *rose*——

Mr. Curry: I will give the figures and then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman who has kept his practice from the European Parliament of making long, boring speeches.

Look at the help for producers. The ewe premium increase from the green pound factor is up by £2·65, and the additional payment for less favoured area producers is up by £2·20 a ewe. So who is winning in the battle for sheepmeat production and the battle for lamb production? It is clearly the United Kingdom. That is the point that I would ask him to put into this equation.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) is absolutely bursting to get in.

Mr. Stevenson: Forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I say that the Minister is obviously bored to tears. That is obvious from his presentation. He referred to the unanimous agreement of the Council to allow the French Government to subsidise its sheep producers, and then he related that to the way in which we were capturing more of the French market. Surely the logic of that is that if we capture even more of the market we shall allow the French to give even more national aid. Would he care to comment on that? What he said did not quite gell.

Mr. Curry: That is not how it was at all. We had a request from the French Government. The Council of Ministers traditionally shows a certain competence when member Governments have problems that they wish to solve. That is what the Community is about. The hon. Gentleman, who is an experienced Member of the European Parliament, will know that that is the case. He has sat in the Agriculture Committee, among others. He will know that that is the tradition by which the Community does business. There comes a point where we can say that we want nothing to do with a particular matter, that we will stick out against it and that this particular thing will not pass, and we all know that there is a point at which we are going to say that we need some benefit for ourselves or a difficulty that we need to resolve.

This happened when we came up to the problem on linseed, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) referred. There we pointed out that the Commission had made a mess of it, that we were in danger of linseed being put into the area aid payment while the seed was in the ground and that before farmers knew where they were we would have an absolute botch-up, and we needed to get an agreement that such a thing would not happen. The export of live horses has also been mentioned. Hon. Members will have received more letters on that subject than on many other issues. That and whales appear to command the particular affection of the British population. If we had not argued a special case, we would not have got the ability to do it. So I make no apology for it. It is part of the lubricant, part of the way in which the Community works.

Mr. Harris: If I may say so, my hon. Friend has missed the point that I was making. I do not necessarily blame him for that. The point that I was making was that the trade-off which was apparently entered into by our right hon. Friend was on the assurance that the French Government would do what they were supposed to do

anyway, guarantee reasonable access for our products into France. That is how it appears in the letter that he himself wrote, and of which I have a copy, to the Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Mr. Curry: What my right hon. Friend said was that there was no way that we would even agree to this being on the agenda for discussion unless the French made it clear that they would fulfil their obligations as members of the Community in respect of our trade. I must point out to my hon. Friend that we do not have a quarrel with the French Government in this respect. We have a quarrel with a good many of its citizens because of their actions, but when it came to encouraging the French Government to resolve the difficulty we had an effective response; and now that there is a new Government in power and we have opposite numbers at last we shall seek to renew those responses as soon as we can make contact with them.

Many hon. Members mentioned the GATT talks. As the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) said, a crucial decision has to be made. The talks have wide implications and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said, GATT is one of the fundamental questions that will determine the way in which agriculture goes in future. I accept his point that eastern and central Europe is the shadow looming just over the horizon at the moment. It may change our agriculture more fundamentally than will the GATT and the CAP reforms put together. That is a fundamental question that we must face.

We debated the sugar regime in Committee this morning, so I will not repeat the points on that on the Floor of the House. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and I dealt with the matter at some length this morning. Clearly, reform is necessary for that regime. It could be argued that it is the least attractive part of the CAP—there are a fair number of candidates for that appellation. The implications for developing countries are especially important. It is, therefore, one of the regimes that need change both because it says something about the way in which the Community works and because it has particular relevance to countries that are dependent on it.

We have rotational set-aside because we needed to take action quickly to reduce production. That has been the story of the CAP over the years. A number of years ago, people said that we needed change and that we must have high prices. There has been a history of Ministers not wishing to grasp those decisions. One gets to the point at which one must take more radical action to deal with the matter quickly. We wish that that were not the case. We are not the Government who have been unwilling to take those more difficult decisions early on. We have found that because of the 54 votes, other Governments have not been willing to take such decisions. We end up with a far more radical proposal. If one is sensible, one tries to build on that and to make something constructive out of it. We are trying to build the non-rotational scheme on to it. I am sure that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) welcomes that, because of the environmental benefits that can be attached. Permanent set-aside was suggested because the creation of woodlands and habitats can be linked. That will make out of a scheme that has its disadvantages something that can create a positive good.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), who is overcome with tiredness at this stage, proposed a series of objectives, but no mechanisms by which to reach the objectives. The amendment is full of many extremely virtuous objectives that we should probably all like to attain, but no mechanism is specified as to how we can get from here to there. It is easy to list virtuous objectives, but if one wants the 54 votes one must have the mechanism and it must be agreed by everyone else on the Council. If not, it is not even worth trying.

Let us be equally clear about the forms. Farmers will receive a lot of money through the post. There is no point in blinking that fact or pretending that it is not the case. It will be the taxpayers' money that they receive. We must therefore ensure two points—that those who are entitled to the money get it, and that those who get the money know that it is properly accounted for because it is part of public expenditure. If one is running the scheme through the framework of supply management, there is no way in which to achieve those two points without ensuring that one knows who is getting what. That means that farmers will have to fill in forms to get the money. Farmers are filing in forms for their own income. We have, of course, made the forms as simple and sensible as we can. However, the need to have such forms is inescapable because taxpayers' money is involved. Next year, about £1·7 billion of taxpayers' money will ride on those forms. It is therefore reasonable that farmers —who are, after all, business men although they may not perceive themselves as such—should deliver the forms that will guarantee their own livelihoods.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) mentioned the problem of the mowing and cutting date and referred to 1 May. The date of 1 May is fixed for the United Kingdom as the first date on which a farmer can replace winter cover with bare fallow or with another cover, but not a crop. However, he does not have to cut as early as 1 May. He must cut at least once by 1 July, so the cutting can be delayed into June for environmental reasons, such as nesting birds. Farmers may apply to delay the cutting beyond 1 July if there are genuine environmental reasons. I am sensitive to these issues as there is in my constituency an environmentally sensitive area where late cutting dates allow seed pods to settle, flowers to seed, and nesting birds to complete their cycle of reproduction. That is very important.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South made at least one point with which I agree—that farming in Europe will have to face more competition in the world market if we are genuinely in a liberalising environment. We do not yet know whether we are. The GATT deal has not been multilateralised; it is simply a bilateral understanding between the Community and the United States, which has to be transformed into a deal. Because we saw that competition, we wanted the aids to be transitional and degressive. We did not want them to be permanent and, indeed, they are not permanent. We want to move agriculture to a lower-cost structure to make it more competitive. We all recognise the danger that the Community could lock itself into a high-cost system and then turn a protectionist face to the outside world. That is why we would have preferred to look for a more subtle mechanism.

Farming has got over the hump of great uncertainty, but there are more uncertainties to come, as much reform has still to be pursued. In addition, some things have not been reformed sufficiently or well enough. We all know that the beef sector is a particular problem which will

[Mr. Curry]

return. At this time last year we would have been arguing that MacSharry was the great threat on the horizon. That threat has now dissipated, the situation has been brought under control, and farmers have benefited significantly. Thus, we are at last able, on the basis of an improving income, to say that it is a time for investment, for confidence and for opportunity, and that the Government have delivered it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 113, Noes 209.

Division No. 228] **[11.16 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod

Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 70.

Division No. 229] **[11 29 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyce, Jimmy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Leighton, Ron
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Don Foster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4608/93, on the prices for agricultural products and on related measures, 1993-94; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate an outcome on the price proposals which takes account of the interests of United Kingdom producers and consumers, builds upon the 1992 Common Agricultural Policy reforms, and takes full account of the realities of the budgetary situation.

PROCEDURE (PUBLIC PETITIONS)

Ordered,

That this House approves the recommendations contained in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the Fourth Report of Session 1991-92 from the Select Committee on Procedure, relating to Public Petitions (HC 286).—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

PETITIONS

Health Nursing (Liverpool)

11.40 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I present a petition that has been signed by 8,000 citizens of Liverpool who are concerned about the reorganisation of district health nursing, which is being reduced from 89·5 FTE to 57. The people of Liverpool depend more and more on qualified nurses in the district health service. It is interesting that Liverpool pioneered district nursing in the 1860s when Florence Nightingale and a social worker in Liverpool, a man who wrote much about the problems of the city, William Rathbone, joined to make, as it were, the first district nurse in the United Kingdom. It is significant that the response of the people of Liverpool to cuts in the service has reached the level of open opposition to the trust scheme.

Therefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House requests that the Secretary of State for Health intervenes to ensure that this reduction in service is prevented and that the level and quality of services provided by the district nursing service in North Mersey is protected and enhanced to meet the real needs of the community.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

A92 (Traffic)

11.41 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I present a petition that has been signed by 2,239 of my constituents in the communities that are affected by the Government's failure to fulfil their commitment to upgrade the A92, which runs between Aberdeen and Ellon, to the north of the city. The collection of the petition has been co-ordinated by local, regional and district councillors. A vital role has been played by the pupils of Foveran primary school, which is close to the road along which an increasing volume of traffic thunders at ever increasing speeds. The children presented the petition to me so that I could bring it to the House. It reads:

The humble petition of the undersigned residents of Gordon showeth that we express deep concern that the Balmedie to Tipperty section of the A92 road is extremely dangerous in its present condition, has been the site of too many serious accidents, and that this road is very close to Foveran Primary School.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will do everything possible to impress upon the Secretary of State for Scotland the need to improve the road by the construction of a dual carriageway, and to announce an early starting date to such improvements.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Walton Neurosciences Trust

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): I was moved to initiate the debate because of the fear that has arisen throughout Liverpool—certainly through the north side of the city—that the Walton centre for neurology and neurosurgery was at real risk because of developments within the Mersey regional health authority. It is a specialist centre and was one of the trusts in the vanguard of the Government's changes to the national health service. When it opted for trust status, it was driven—I choose my words carefully—by the then chairman of the RHA, Sir Donald Wilson.

Hospitals and services within the Mersey region, including the centre in Walton, sought trust status on the basis of promises that there would be funding availability and that flexibility would be given to ensure that the trusts were successful in their own right and in their right as hospitals. However, after they became trusts, the pan-Liverpool review body reported. The body was set up to examine health care provision throughout the area. Tucked away inside one of the consultation documents was the suggestion that neurosciences should be relocated away from the Walton hospital site at the Royal Liverpool hospital in the city centre. That was despite the investment of millions of pounds in the site at Walton. I stress that the centre is highly specialised.

The proposal to relocate the unit also ignored the view expressed in the review body document of 31 July 1989. It said that the neurosurgeons and neurologists were more than happy where they were. The decision seemed to be administratively driven to ease Walton away from that site.

The fate that was dangled before the Walton was a different scenario—a transfer from the Walton site to a new purpose-built unit at Fazackerley hospital. Such a move would have required a massive infusion of cash—a projected cost of about £40 million. That was hardly likely to happen, given that, right next door to the Fazackerely hospital, the Government were committed to wasting £110 million on a new prison. I doubt whether the money would be found to provide the hospital extension that would have been required.

The Walton centre is developing into a centre of excellence. It serves a catchment area of about 3 million people. That includes Merseyside, north Wales, the Isle of Man and west Lancashire. In certain circumstances, it takes cases from much further afield. It provides a high-quality integrated diagnostic and therapeutic service on that site. It has a highly skilled team. It caters particularly for patients with disorders of the nervous system.

If the service is to be successful and effective, it must continue to be an integrated multidisciplinary neurosciences unit. That cannot be the case if the neurosciences unit is fragmented by parts of it being dispersed to district general hospitals. The unit must be developed. The people who run the place want to develop it as a centre for head, neck and spine surgery, neurology and neurological rehabilitation. Thus, the centre is an ideal site for a major trauma centre. It remains under some threat, because saving pounds appears to be more important to some people than saving lives.

We need to put the specialist centre into context. The same pan-Liverpool review body has been a source of contention in many parts of health service provision on Merseyside. Only yesterday, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), we had a visit from the nurses of the north Mersey community trust. As my hon. Friend said, the trust is the first of its type. I believe that it is being watched by bodies around the country to see what happens. It was set up in 1859 by William Rathbone and Florence Nightingale. It is going through what can only be described as a de-skilling exercise, which will lead to a diminution of the services offered to people by the dedicated, skilled nurses who go out into the community.

Broadgreen hospital is to lose its accident and emergency department, as is the Walton site. It has been said that the casualty department of a hospital is literally and metaphorically the doorway through which patients come. It keeps the complimentary and acute services busy.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I wish to amplify my hon. Friend's point about Broadgreen hospital. It relates directly to the wider implications of the York review, which refers to the Walton unit. Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the national health service, visited Mersey regional health authority in December. I wish to quote a section of the document that he produced then. He referred to the main bed reductions that would be made in the Liverpool area. There are several reasons why such bed reductions are being considered. He said:

"Main bed reductions would need to take place at the Aintree and Broadgreen Trusts . . . The configuration options for"—

what the document described as—

"the rump of Broadgreen would then be to merge with the CTC Trust"—

the other trust on the Broadgreen site—

"or to become an annexe of the Royal".

It then referred directly to the neurosciences unit and said:

"The other provider issue concerned the Aintree Trust moving off the Walton site"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Lady, but she is making a speech rather than an intervention.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out the many uncertainties. If different voices are heard on behalf of the health service, that undermines those people who want to put their faith in a particular site.

I used the metaphor of closing the door. If it is closed, inevitably the acute services will be relocated to those hospitals with accident and emergency provision. If there is no such provision, as sure as night follows day, many of the services currently located at the Walton centre will go. That will be no fault of those trying to do a job there, but because the means to do the job will not be at their disposal.

The logic is inescapable: if the casualty provision is taken away from Walton hospital, it will be difficult for the neurosciences experts there to defend their wish to remain at that site. The ideal of Walton becoming a major trauma

[Mr. Kilfoyle]

centre then becomes a distant dream. A sham exercise is taking place, under the guise of consultation, on accident and emergency provision in the city.

It is strange that, while that consultation is taking place, £1·9 million has been granted to the Royal Liverpool hospital, through the outpost system, to expand its accident and emergency unit. That seems to pre-empt the outcome of any independent consultation. It shows that the regional health authority is determined to have its way, come what may. I fear that we will soon be faced with a fait accompli in accident and emergency provision for the area.

If the health authority's preferred option—No. 2.2.1—is implemented, on my computation it will mean that about 690 beds will have been lost since the creation of the trust in the area covered by the pan-Liverpool review. It would mean the loss of 34 of the 135 beds that existed at the Walton centre when it originally took trust status.

The accountants who seem increasingly to be in charge of the health service would not think it viable, in terms of numbers, for the centre to continue on that site; yet the centre is an extremely valuable resource—not just its buildings and equipment, but its highly skilled, dedicated, motivated and professional teams of staff.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that the number and range of specialisms at the centre are quite remarkable. It does neurosurgery, spinal surgery, head injuries, intensive care, paediatric neurosurgery, neurology, disability and rehabilitation, pain relief neurophysiology, neuroradiology and neuropathology. The list goes on and on. In addition, the centre is heavily involved in teaching and research, and it has strong links with Liverpool univerity's department of neurosciences. There is also the adjacent Pain Foundation, of which the Minister will be aware, as I understand that it is the only one of its kind in the country, if not in Europe.

The Walton centre has every intention to develop those links. It wants to establish chairs in neurosurgery, pain science and rehabilitation, to add to the new chair that has just been established in neurology. All those welcome and progressive developments are under threat.

Walton is a hospital with strong community links. Everybody in north Liverpool knows it—all have had some dealings with it at some stage. Despite its faults, it has a reputation as a good, caring hospital that clearly identifies with the local community.

The "strategic direction" document for 1993-98, put out by the centre itself, contains four important points about future site options. The first is:

"We will continue discussions with Aintree Hospitals Trust to reach an understanding of the final disposition of services and the timescale of any changes."

That is important because, effectively, there are still two trusts on one site: the Aintree hospital trust and the Walton centre.

The second says:

"we plan to remain on the Walton site so long as the other specialties remain or can be attracted to this site."

Obviously, without those specialties, the site is not viable.

The third point is:

"The best option is to develop the Walton Centre as a Centre for Head, Neck and Spine Surgery, Neurology and Neurological Rehabilitation. With this combination of specialities it would become an ideal site for a major Trauma Centre."

Last but not least, there is a

"need for a separate in depth study of the possible options for the provision of Neurosciences which will clearly include the preferred option for staying on the Walton Site."

In the summer of 1991, I visited the hospital to see the opening of the latest state-of-the-art technology—a huge scanner. As an Evertonian, I was pained by the fact that it was opened by Graham Souness; nevertheless, the scanner had cost millions of pounds, which had been paid by public subscription. The working people of Liverpool are renowned for the generosity they show to charitable causes: anyone who knows anything about Alderhey children's hospital knows about the funds that are raised. More important, this instance was undeniable proof of the commitment of the people of Liverpool to the centre, which is very popular and very effective.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: The people of Liverpool may strongly support Walton hospital—as they support Broadgreen—and the trust itself may have plans for its own future that it is seeking to develop. However, Mersey regional health authority clearly has other plans. Over the last five years, three separate documents have been issued, each saying something different. The document issued in December included a third option for the neurosurgical unit.

Mr. Kilfoyle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Despite all the protestations of the people of Liverpool—even when the trusts were being established—despite the huge number of petitions that were collected and despite united opposition, the regional health authority, under the chairmanship of Sir Donald Wilson, seemed hell bent on using Liverpool and its hospitals as a test bed. I hope to say more about that later.

I was talking about the generosity of Liverpudlians to causes such as the Walton hospital. I hope that the Minister will reciprocate by giving an unequivocal commitment that the Walton centre will remain where it is, and substantially as it is. We all recognise that change is inevitable, but I have given my reasons for hoping that the Minister will make such a commitment.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) suggested a moment ago, there has been a recurrent theme in the Mersey region—the theme of health care being used as a test bed for the latest cost-cutting exercise devised by those who are motivated by cost saving rather than life saving. I do not like to say that, but it is the only conclusion that I can reach.

What is perhaps unique about the Walton centre is that, having followed the line of Sir Donald Wilson and Tory ideologues who forced through these so-called reforms, the trust is now discovering that the idea that it—the trust—was the way forward for the centre is not all that it seemed at the time. The blunt truth is that the money for further developments has run out: it is not there on the scale that is required for rationalisation of the kind that was planned—for example, the transfer to the Fazackerley site.

The health authority is looking for ever more ways of cutting costs, without proper regard to patient care of the need to keep specialist units together in the only way that will ensure their viability. Tonight, the Minister should consider—it is an important point for him politically—not only the opposition that he would naturally expect from Labour Members but the concerns of those who believed the Government and their promises and involved

themselves in trusts. Will the Minister tell us whether those people are now as dispensable as many of the health facilities on Merseyside appear to be?

11.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I am glad to have a chance to respond to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) in this debate on the future of the Walton centre for neurology and neurosurgery.

The centre has been an NHS trust since April 1992. It is situated in the grounds of Walton hospital, and for many years has provided a service to patients from all 10 districts in Mersey region, as well as Clwyd and Gwynedd in north Wales, parts of west Lancashire and the Isle of Man. The total population it serves is about 3 million. It is recognised as a centre of excellence, as the hon. Gentleman said, and it enjoys a first-class reputation in the local community and beyond for neurosurgery, pain relief and neurology services.

I was pleased to visit the centre last October and to open the excellent new operating theatre suite—I am afraid that I am not a footballer—which was hugely impressive. It had been refurbished with the addition of a fourth operating theatre and a new five-bed recovery suite. I saw a presentation of the centre's fully integrated computer system, which is the first of its kind in the country.

Waiting times in the centre are extremely encouraging. No one is waiting more than 12 months for treatment. The new scanner, which, as the hon. Gentleman said, was opened 12 months ago at a cost of £1·4 million, is being used with great success. Other encouraging developments include the refurbishment of the centre's out-patient facilities and the appointment of two new consultants. The centre received recognition from the NHS Management Executive for meeting its financial duties and is reporting an encouraging financial outturn.

Why are we having this debate? I well understand the hon. Member's concern about the future of the centre, stemming immediately from the recent review of hospital services in Liverpool conducted by the York Health Economics Consortium. The hon. Member is aware that the York study was set up to see how the recommendations of the "Pan-Liverpool" report could be developed and implemented. "Pan-Liverpool" made a number of recommendations, including the future of acute services and neurosciences.

The York review must be viewed against the background in Liverpool of a population that has declined by more than 8 per cent. in the past 10 years up to 1991, the fact that Liverpool health authority is a loser under weighted capitation funding; changes to clinical practice that affect everywhere—not only Liverpool—moves to more day-case surgery; development of so-called keyhole techniques; and other developments that involve fewer days having to be spent in bed.

A key conclusion of the York study was that, due to the factors that I have just mentioned and others, fewer people in Liverpool will need to stay in hospital, and that those who stay will do so for a shorter time and will benefit from non-invasive techniques and improved rehabilitation. This suggests that the health care of the future will be much less dependent on hospital beds and much more community-focused.

The study recommended that the city would be best served by two district general hospitals based at the Royal Liverpool and Aintree hospital trusts, supported by facilities at Broadgreen.

I have already said that "Pan-Liverpool" made recommendations on neurosciences. The clear recommendation was that services should be moved to Fazackerley, part of the Aintree trust. Although the regional health authority welcomed the general direction of service development proposed in "Pan-Liverpool", no further action has been taken on the recommendation. That is how we stand today.

However, I well understand concerns about the future. I have said already that a fundamental part of the Liverpool health authority's proposals is the development of Aintree hospital trust as one of the two centres for the city's acute centres. Allied to that, Aintree has had to consider its configuration.

The first stage of implementation, in the shape of major capital investment in a new £7 million accident and emergency unit at Fazackerley, is already under way. The new unit is due to open in summer 1994 and will provide one of the most modern and the third largest A and E departments in the country. The trust plans to transfer all in-patient acute services to the Fazackerley site over approximately the next three years, with out-patient services, day surgery and diagnostic services remaining on the Walton site to provide continuing access for the local community.

Clearly, as the hon. Gentleman recognises, the proposed changes on the Walton site of the Aintree trust may have consequences for the Walton centre for neurology and neurosurgery. The future location of the centre can be determined only by the demands of the service. I am sure that the Walton centre is correct in approaching the "problem" as an opportunity. The trust board is aiming to retain the Walton site as the preferred option. As I said, there is clear evidence of the significant progress that the centre has made since being established as a second wave trust. The centre has strong links with the university of Liverpool, the Pain Foundation and many voluntary agencies which assist it in carrying out its work throughout the region.

As I said, the future location of the Walton centre must be determined by the demands of the service. Some patients treated at the centre require the skills of other specialties in addition to those of the centre. Co-operation is more successful when staff are on the same site. The centre plans to remain on the Walton site as long as the other specialties necessary remain on, or can be attracted to, the site, thus monitoring the well established patterns of co-operation of clinicians and support services.

Another factor that needs to be taken into account in a transfer off site is the cost in both revenue and capital terms. The cost may be considerable. The current purpose-built accommodation was built in 1972 and is in good condition. Recent improvements have been the completion of an upgrading of the new theatre facility to provide a fourth theatre and a new recovery suite. They are strong arguments for retaining the site.

However, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the commitment he seeks, that there will be no changes. I must emphasise, however, that decisions have not yet been taken. "Pan-Liverpool" remains the definitive statement of

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

Mersey's policy, and the region intends to revisit the specific recommendations when other developments become clear.

Let me emphasise that any change will be purchaser-driven. In other words, it is about patients and a perception by the purchaser of the needs of patients, not about institutions. We have faced the same problem in many large cities, including London where, recently, well established and well loved institutions, which have been in existence for many years, have become vulnerable because of changes in population and clinical practice. It may become necessary to take very difficult decisions based on two things.

First, such a decision would have to be based on the fact that, as a result of the separation of the purchaser and provider, purchasers have the obligation to purchase provision in line with the needs of a specific population —no more, no less. If they do more than that, other parts of the NHS must, by definition, make sacrifices.

It is a difficult balance to strike. Difficult decisions have had to be made in London. I myself have recently been involved in difficult decisions involving well loved and well established hospitals in Birmingham, and there is a similar situation in south Manchester. It is a feature of the large conurbations of this country that historical factors have often resulted in over-provision and duplication of services, which cannot but have an effect on the rest of the NHS.

As I have said, we have to find out, from the point of view of the purchaser—

Mr. Kilfoyle: Does the Minister see the distinction between the Walton centre and the type of hospital that he is talking about? I have explained, and the hon. Gentleman is fully aware, that the catchment area of the specialist unit is far wider than the urban areas of Liverpool, and includes north Wales, the Isle of Man, west Lancashire and the whole of Merseyside. So the catchment area does not fluctuate a great deal.

Will the hon. Gentleman also deal in more detail with the withdrawal of other acute services from the site? What does that mean for the future of the Walton centre?

Mr. Sackville: We are not talking about the future of the centre as an entity. It is a centre of excellence; it is needed; it will be provided. We are talking about the knock-on effect of changes to acute services in the Liverpool area. There are various possibilities, as I have said, and the decisions have not been made, and cannot be made at this stage.

I can only tell the hon. Gentleman that the value of the centre is well recognised, and that it provides an excellent service. Its future must be decided in tandem with changes that may be made to acute services in Liverpool, but the hon. Gentleman need not doubt that the centre will remain, and will continue to serve the people of the north-west of England in the excellent way in which it has done since 1972.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 1 April 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 15 April.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 15 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT (Fuel)

1. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the levying of VAT on domestic heating announced in the Budget.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): I have received a number of representations.

Ms Quin: Does the Chancellor agree that his time before the Budget would have been better spent had he not remained in purdah but talked to a number of the people who will be hardest hit by these proposals? Does he further agree that, as well as the people on benefit who are worried about how they are going to pay those higher bills, people just above benefit level are frightened that this measure will push them further into the poverty trap? Will he think again about this measure before it is too late?

Mr. Lamont: On the first point, the hon. Lady suggested that I should have been out listening rather than reflecting in quiet, but, by doing so I was able to read the manifesto of the Leader of the Opposition in which he said:

"We should consider increased use of the fiscal system to promote environmental protection."

I also had the opportunity to read Labour's policy document "Looking to the Future", which said:

"We will be looking of ways of increasing taxes on environmentally damaging products."

The fact is that when we look at a problem we decide to do something about it, rather than write a lot of words which we then retreat from. That is the difference between being in government and being in opposition and mouthing platitudes.

Sir Terence Higgins: Will the Chancellor give an assurance that in calculating the extra amount to compensate pensioners and those on low incomes for the effect of the tax—which will be paid in advance of the tax coming into operation—he will not take account of any change in the underlying level of fuel prices which may have occurred in the interim? If that is so, will he announce the amount now rather than wait until autumn?

Mr. Lamont: I note my right hon. Friend's point. He knows that we have announced that we will bring forward the extra help so that it will be avaiiable from April 1994, at the precise moment that the bills will arrive. We have done that because we wish to help. We have made it very clear that while we regard this measure as necessary on both fiscal and environmental grounds, it is not our intention that poorer people should suffer. I have made that abundantly clear.

Mr. William Ross: Since the Chancellor has now broken through the zero-rated barrier, does he realise that no one will believe him when he says that he will maintain the zero rate principle on many other items? Does not he see the danger that this very unpopular tax will, for the Tories, eventually prove to be the equivalent of the poll tax in the previous Parliament?

Mr. Lamont: What the British public expect from the Government is that we should pursue sound finance. That is the overwhelming and first commitment of the Government.

Mr. Wilkinson: When Lord Barber introduced VAT on April fool's day 20 years ago, he boasted that the British rates of VAT were the simplest to implement within Europe. Would it be reasonable to say that from 1995-96 and beyond that to 1996-97, if the Government get their budget deficit back under control, there could still be a hope of getting VAT on domestic fuel down again?

Mr. Lamont: We have only just put our proposals forward and intend to legislate for them. It would be quite wrong for me to speculate about future years. I make this observation to my hon. Friend: Britain's average rate of VAT, measured across all products, is one of the lowest in the Community.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Should not the Chancellor have been reading his own election commitments, when he said that there were no circumstances in which value added tax on fuel, gas or electricity would be raised? Is not that the reason why the country will never trust the Chancellor again? Will he confirm that, as a result of the changes in VAT, the typical British family will soon be paying £15 a week in VAT, compared with £1·86 when the Labour party left office, and that the biggest element in that is the VAT on gas and electricity, which will cost £2 a week. Is not it a disgrace that the Government, who believe that unemployment is a "price well worth paying" for their

economic failure, also appear to believe now that poverty among pensioners is a price well worth paying for their economic failure? Will he now answer—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like it because we are telling the truth about what is happening. Will the Chancellor answer one simple question? Is he now proposing that, on top of VAT on the use of fuel, he will also impose VAT on standing charges for gas and electricity—yes or no?

Mr. Lamont: I assure the hon. Gentleman that, far from not liking what he says, we always love everything that he says in the House.

I know that the hon. Gentleman yesterday had a briefing and a lunch with British Gas, as a result of which he was informed that VAT applied to standing charges. If it did not apply to standing charges, that would be an obvious case of avoidance. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer!"] I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question and will not take any lectures on the subject from the Labour party which, when it was in office, increased electricity prices by 168 per cent.—an average of almost 20·7 per cent. a year. As I observed in my wind-up speech in the Budget debate, we know who the Minister of State at the Department of Energy was at that time—the Leader of the Opposition. We also know why the Government of the day did it—because they were so in hock to the International Monetary Fund that they had to shove up electricity prices. We will not take any lectures from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Corporation Tax

2. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the differential between the level of corporation tax in the United Kingdom and equivalent taxes in other EC countries.

3. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the difference between the level of corporation tax in the United Kingdom and equivalent taxes in other EC countries.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The proposed main rate of UK corporation tax for the financial year 1993 is 33 per cent. The main rates on distributed profits in other European Community states vary between 33⅓ and 40 per cent.

Mr. Stephen: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is much better for British industry and commerce to have a simple system of company taxation at the lowest possible rate, rather than the complex system of capital allowances much favoured by the Opposition parties, as they distort investment decisions and are open to abuse?

Mr. Dorrell: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The consequence of the corporation tax changes introduced in the 1980s is that we have cut the marginal rate of corporation tax on profits from 52 per cent. when we came to power to 33 per cent. now—the lowest rate in the European Community. That is one of the factors which make this country an attractive place for business to invest. That must have been one of the factors that Mr. Delors took into account when he correctly described this country as a paradise for Japanese investment.

Mr. Robathan: My hon. Friend mentioned inward investment. How much encouragement does he believe that the low rate of taxation has given foreign companies in the past? Does he believe that the low rate of corporate taxation will continue to encourage inward investment into this country?

Mr. Dorrell: I believe that a low rate of corporation tax is an important part of the Government's total commitment to attracting a high rate of inward investment —a policy which has been startlingly successful. Some 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in Europe is based in the United Kingdom and one third of all inward investment into the European Community in 1991 came to the United Kingdom. That is because we have set out to make this country an attractive place in which business can invest in order to employ people and create wealth.

Mr. Sheldon: Is not it a misleading over-simplification to talk about the corporation tax rate of other countries without going into the complicated ways in which they give allowances for capital investment, particularly on plant and machinery? In this respect, while I understand that the Treasury will not increase the level of capital allowances in the way that I, for one, would wish to see, will the hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that the increase from 25 to 40 per cent., due to expire on 31 October this year, will be extended?

Mr. Dorrell: No, but I can give the right hon. Gentleman the undertaking that we will carry out the policy that we announced in the autumn statement: to have time-limited investment allowances of the sort that were written into the Labour party's manifesto at the last election. It is rather odd that the right hon. Gentleman should seek to move away from it. What is not an over-simplification is that plant and machinery investment in Britain today is running over 50 per cent. higher in real terms than it was when the Labour party left office in 1979. There is an investment boom in this country by firms that recognise that Britain is an attractive place in which to do business.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Financial Secretary confirm that to state the rate is not to state the tax burden and that, in the United Kingdom, company taxes account for 4 per cent. of GDP while the European Community average is 3·1 per cent. of GDP? Will he further confirm that in the OECD only Australia, Japan, Luxembourg and Norway have higher corporate tax takes than we do?

Mr. Dorrell: To state the rate is to state the incentive, which is the important thing when considering whether an investment is to go ahead. The hon. Gentleman quotes a series of selective figures, which discount the fact that the figures for other countries for business investment should take account of the much higher rates of tax that they impose, for example, through their national insurance systems. Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman discounts the fact that British business has been successful at generating profits—more successful than it was when the Labour party was in power.

Sir Anthony Durant: Is my hon. Friend aware that, only this morning, I took two Japanese business men to the Board of Trade because they have looked at the whole of Europe and decided that this is the best place to come, with quite large sums of money? They feel that the atmosphere, taxation and everything is right for setting up business.

Mr. Dorrell: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his actions and on the fact that he is drawing the attention of his Japanese business friends to the attractive nature of the regime for investment here. It is not only Japanese or overseas investors who find this an attractive place in which to do business. It would occasionally be nice to hear congratulations from Labour Members on the fact that 10 of the top 20 European companies are British companies which are successfully doing business in this country and proving themselves in the marketplace to be more successful than their competitors.

Mr. Skinner: The Japanese are probably doing exceptionally well because they know the difference between threes and fives. The Minister referred to 33 per cent. corporation tax. Did he get that figure from the Chancellor of the Exchequer? If he did, how do we know that it is correct? It could be 55 per cent. I throw out a challenge to the Chancellor. I will play him at fives and threes at dominos and I will win every time and give the money to the pensioners to pay the extra VAT.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on the fact that the £35 billion worth of public expenditure commitments that the Labour party made in its manifesto at the general election might have been £53 billion.

Income Tax

4. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of taxpayers in 1993-94 who will be paying income tax solely at a rate of 20 per cent. and the number of taxpayers whose incomes are at a level where more than half the income tax they pay is calculated at the rate of 20 per cent.

Mr. Lamont: The figures are 4·9 million and more than 8 million respectively.

Mr. Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of my constituents are among those millions who are benefiting from the 20 per cent. band of income tax? Is not that 20 per cent. rate of income tax, as it is being implemented, a firm example of the way in which we meet our manifesto commitments? Can he explain why the Labour party refuses to support the 20 per cent. band?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I should have thought that it was eminently desirable that our starting rate of tax should come down to a level comparable with that of many other countries. The Labour party used to support that policy, but when the Conservative party implements it, it suddenly becomes wrong and the Labour party no longer supports it.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Chancellor confirm that, as a result of freezing personal allowances, 300,000 more people will pay tax at 20 per cent. rather than at zero? Before the right hon. Gentleman brings the order to the House to implement that outrageous policy, will he invite his hon. Friends to sound out the 500 people in each of their constituencies who will have a tax increase from zero to 20p in the pound in order to discuss with them the fairness of such a policy before his hon. Friends vote on it?

Mr. Lamont: What the hon. Gentleman ignores is the fact that, as a result of the Government's policies, almost 1·5 million more people are non-taxpayers than would be the case had we carried on with the tax regime that we inherited from the Labour Government when we came to power. Furthermore, when one takes into account the Opposition's promises and their public expenditure consequences, they cannot give us any lectures about taxation. We shall listen to the Opposition on income tax only when they join us in promising to work to reduce the basic rate of income tax to 20p in the pound.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that low marginal rates of direct income taxation are not only an incentive to hard work and enterprise, but are a significant factor when overseas companies are deciding where to put their manufacturing plant and, even more importantly, their European head offices? They will not invest in countries where their highly qualified executives are excessively taxed. Is not that why the previous Labour Government, with a marginal rate of 83 per cent., had a much worse record than this Government in attracting inward investment?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. Britain has one of the most attractive and competitive direct tax systems in the world and we have made it clear that we intend to maintain it that way. The Opposition favour high rates of tax and, in the past, such high, confiscatory rates of tax have been counter-productive because they raise less revenue.

National Insurance

5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with employees' and employers' organisations about his plan to increase national insurance contributions.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): National insurance contributions were mentioned in a number of representations received before the Budget.

Mr. Cohen: Did not those organisations tell the Chancellor and the Minister that an increase in national insurance contributions would be a tax on employment, with the result that about 18 million employees and 2 million self-employed people will be worse off and 500,000 people who have earned too little to pay income tax will have to pay the increase in national insurance contributions? Leaving aside the Prime Minister's statement last January that he had no plans to increase national insurance contributions, which now looks like an election con, does not the Government's insurance policy seem to be to up the premiums while cutting the benefit payouts?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that we are paying about £37 billion a year in contributory benefits. Is that to be paid mostly by people in work or by taxpayers in general? If the hon. Gentleman's solution is that it should be paid by taxpayers in general, he is asking pensioners, people who have retired and people who are not in work to contribute to the ongoing benefits of other people. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman wishes to support such a policy. We have a national insurance fund and it is a sound principle that, taking one year with another, as much as possible of it should be balanced.

Mr. Luff: Does my right hon. Friend agree that as long as we have a national insurance fund it must be adequately financed and that it is right to increase contributions when demand rises and reduce them when it falls?

Mr. Portillo: The Government have shown some flexibility on that point in that, during the recession, when less money has come into the fund, we have been willing to see a Treasury supplement paid into it. But my hon. Friend must be right. We are paying out a huge amount in benefits. The average working person is now paying £10 each working day for social security benefits. It is right that people should be aware of that and, in principle, over a period of time, our national insurance fund should be balanced.

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Minister confirm that the proposed increases in national insurance contributions are not only a complete abdication of the promises given by the Conservative party at the election, but another increase in the overall level of taxation that the country is suffering? Will he further confirm that the overall level of taxation is now higher than it was when the Government took office in 1979?

Mr. Portillo: If the hon. Gentleman holds views so strongly, why did he sign up to a manifesto that intended to increase national insurance contributions by 9 per cent., on top of income tax increases of 10 per cent? He wanted to increase the burden on the country's wealth-creating sector by 19 per cent., yet he has the cheek to criticise the Government.

Deregulation

6. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about the measures announced in the Budget involving deregulation.

Mr. Lamont: The Budget proposals will make an important contribution to the Government's deregulation initiative. The changes announced have been warmly welcomed in the business community—particularly the proposals on the statutory audit. In the longer term, the burden on the self-employed will be substantially eased by my proposals for simplified self-assessment.

Mr. Evans: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his answer. Does he understand the importance to small business men in particular of the introduction of self-assessment as a system of deregulation and in relieving the burden?

Mr. Lamont: The self-assessment proposals were warmly welcomed by the Federation of Small Businesses and the Forum of Private Business. There are strong arguments for self-assessment. It is a simpler, better system for the ordinary citizen and it is a good thing that the people of this country should know the tax consequences of Government spending.

Mr. Cryer: Will not the self-employed who disappeared owing £114 million in tax in 1991-92 be delighted with self-assessment, because it is wide open to corruption? The Chancellor claims to reduce the burdens of business, but is not every extension of value added tax an imposition on small businesses, which have to act as tax-gatherers without receiving any money for doing so? Last year, the Government produced more statutory instruments—which are in the main burdensome regulations, affecting the community at large, including small businesses—than ever before in the history of Parliament. Does not that demonstrate that the Government are all words and no action?

Mr. Lamont: I am slightly surprised about the hon. Gentleman's remarks about VAT, bearing in mind his first comments. The more that taxation is shifted towards indirect tax, the easier it is to deal with the black economy and to collect tax in that direction. The hon. Gentleman's comments are difficult to understand. I am sure that everybody, including small business organisations, recognises the hon. Gentleman's first point, when he seemed to characterise small business men as a lot of tax cheats. That is not our view.

Environment

7. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reaction he has received from environmental organisations about the measures announced in the Budget statement.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): The Budget measures designed to encourage more efficient use of energy have been welcomed by a number of environmental organisations.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Is my hon. Friend aware that Friends of the Earth, no less, commenting on my right hon. Friend's fiscal measures to help the environment, said that the Budget was bad for energy wasters, gas guzzlers and perk company cars? Is not it hypocritical of the Opposition to portray themselves as green, but they squeal like mad when it hurts them in the pocket?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Friends of the Earth welcomed the Budget measures and if the Opposition are so incensed about the tax, one is bound to ask why they do not promise to reverse it.

Mr. Alex Carlile: In reacting to the Budget, have environmental organisations reminded the Treasury that substantial investment is being made in renewable energy sources, such as wind farms? If so, will the Minister take steps to ensure favourable fiscal treatment of electricity suppliers that are able to draw part of their supply from renewable energy sources?

Mr. Nelson: The hon. and learned Gentleman speaks on behalf of wind farms and does so with vigour and passion. I hear what he says and I am sure that there is something in it. The main objective must be to comply with the Rio targets and conventions and the hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals would go hardly any way towards reaching that ambitious target.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Before the Minister drowns in self-congratulation, will he acknowledge that Greenpeace, no less, said of the Budget that the overall proposal was a setback for the environment? If the Minister is really interested in helping the environment, will he put into practice Labour's national energy efficiency programme, which would save four times the CO_2 that the Government claim through the imposition of VAT? Will he bring forward environmental improvement measures that can

generate jobs as well as save energy? Should not the Minister be insulating pensioners' homes rather than inflating their fuel bills?

Mr. Nelson: As I said earlier, Friends of the Earth welcome our proposals. It is impossible always to please every environmental group. If the hon. Gentleman objects to the cost of imposing the taxation, it strikes me as strange that he should now propose that we go even further.

In the forthcoming year, the Government will spend some £40 million on the home energy efficiency scheme. That will greatly benefit nearly a quarter of a million households.

Exports

8. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about measures to assist exports announced in the Budget.

Mr. Lamont: The reduction in export credit premiums and the £1·3 billion extension of cover that I announced in the Budget will enhance the ability of British exporters to compete in some of the most important, fastest growing markets in the world.

Mr. Bates: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. Is he aware that the measures that he has announced to help exports will be particularly welcome in the north-east, which already exports a larger proportion of its manufacturing production than almost any other region? Does he recognise that export success has as much to do with individual endeavour and enterprise as with Government support and assistance? Will he join me in welcoming the establishment of a self-help programme—the manufacturing challenge for north-east industry—which has been launched with the twin aims of doubling the region's manufacturing base and tripling exports in the next 10 years?

Mr. Lamont: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful to him for mentioning the north-east manufacturing challenge. He can be assured that we will do all that we can to encourage agencies and business men in the north-east to support that initiative. Given their energy and commitment, I am sure that the outstanding export performance of the north-east will be enhanced further.

The measures that I announced in the Budget have been strongly welcomed—particularly by the British chambers of commerce—as a major boost for exports. The availability of lower premiums and more cover will enable us to compete in some of the markets that are particularly important to us.

Value Added Tax

9. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of an average household's income is forecast to be spent on VAT *(a)* in 1993-94 and *(b)* in 1994-95.

Mr. Nelson Around 5½ per cent. of income in 1993-94 for a family on average earnings.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister accept that while the top 10 per cent. of earners spend less than 3·5 per cent. of their income on fuel, the bottom 10 per cent. spend more than 13 per cent of their much smaller income on fuel? Does he accept that a couple on income support, with two children, will have to pay an extra £2 a week for fuel as a result of the Chancellor's Budget proposals? Will he now end people's agony, suspense and misery by giving an assurance that they will be compensated in full?

Mr. Nelson: The Budget as a whole ensures that the better off will pay more. It is undoubtedly true that, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said, substantial help will be made available to assist people with the VAT costs that they will have to pay next year. As for the burden of tax generally, real take-home pay has risen considerably since the Government came to office. All in all, we should be judged according to our deeds rather than our words. We have protected those most in need, and everyone else is better off.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government's policy has been to shift the burden of taxation away from incomes and on to expenditure? Over the past 14 years, the top rate of income tax has fallen from 83p to 40p, and the bottom rate has fallen from 33p—the rate under the last Labour Government—to 20p.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—there has been a progressive move away from direct taxation and towards indirect taxation. This party, and this Government, believe that people should be left with as much as possible of the product of their own earnings and savings to spend as they think best.

Ms Harman: Will the Minister clarify the position? The Chancellor was deliberately confusing on this point? Is it now admitted that VAT will be imposed on standing charges for gas and electricity as well as on the fuel actually used? If so, will the Minister explain how it can be an environmental matter to impose VAT on standing charges which do not vary according to the amount of gas or electricity used?

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has made the position perfectly clear on this matter. I have nothing more to add.

Value Added Tax Charities

10. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he is giving to relieving registered charities of the present VAT costs.

Mr. Dorrell: There are a number of measures in the Budget to assist charitable giving, as well as a special transitional scheme to help charities which receive income from dividends.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcome those measures in the Budget and my hon. Friend's reminder, but could he not see his way to removing some of the VAT disincentives to contributors to charities as well as the burden on charities, which are now doing more and more and better and better, as needs must?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to praise those involved with charities for the increasing contribution that they make. We welcome that, and we have given extensive support to it. We believe that the best way to help the charity movement to carry out its task is to provide incentives to those who give money to charity. That is why

we have increased substantially the range of tax reliefs available—the majority of them on the giving of money to charities rather than the expenditure of money by charities. In total, those tax reliefs now have a value of £1 billion, of which £150 million amounts to direct VAT reliefs.

Mr. Mandelson: In view of the additional burden on charities created by the extension of VAT to fuel, will the Minister clarify once and for all whether the VAT extension will apply to standing charges on fuel bills, and will he tell us clearly what exactly is the environmental justification for that?

Mr. Dorrell: There is absolutely no secret about this. It has been said from the Dispatch Box repeatedly since Budget day that the answer is yes, it does apply to standing charges. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear to those who were listening to his answer a few moments ago, to try to levy VAT on energy without levying it on standing charges would be to establish an easy and obvious avoidance loophole.

Wage Costs

11. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the growth in unit wage costs in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other EC countries over the past year.

Mr. Portillo: While over the latest year manufacturing unit wage costs in Germany rose by more than 9 per cent. in Britain they fell by 1 per cent. That is excellent news for British jobs.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, which confirms that manufacturing productivity in Britain is better than it is in Germany—and also, I believe, in Japan. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there has never been a better opportunity for manufacturing firms in Norwich and throughout the country to exploit opportunities in world markets and in the single market, and that it is bad news that there are those in this country at this time who are willing to encourage strike action in any part of the economy?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. We expect competitiveness to be about 20 per cent. better during the year ahead than in the year gone by. Strikes are the worst possible advertisement to those thinking of investing in this country. Those who are thinking of investing in this country will want to hear clearly from the Labour party that it condemns the strikes and sees that strikes are pointless and self-defeating. They will also want the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to get up now and condemn the strikes.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister confirm that we have some of the lowest unit wage costs in Europe, which accounts for some of our attraction to overseas industry, but that a major part of the budget of pensioners and others on low incomes will be the standing charges on their fuel bills? Those standing charges will amount sometimes to 50 per cent. and sometimes to three quarters of their fuel bills. That has nothing to do with fuel consumption. Do the Government believe that it is sensible to tackle global warming by increasing the number of deaths from hypothermia?

Mr. Portillo: The Labour party is not very good at listening. It has heard the answer to that point time after time. The hon. Gentleman is saying that he does not believe in flexibility, that he does not believe in competition, that he does not believe in attracting jobs to this country. I am pleased to say that Bosch, which recently decided to move a plant from Stuttgart to Cardiff, knows the scene. The Federation of German Industry has said that at the Cardiff plant there is "strong motivation" and a "flexibility unknown in Germany". Why does the hon. Gentleman not welcome that?

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend cast his mind back to the late 1970s, when companies such as Ford and Vauxhall were falling over themselves to move production from Britain, and compare that with the current situation, in which, for the first time in 20 years, Vauxhall and Ford are exporting substantial numbers of cars? Those companies are moving the production of engines and components back to Britain and, as my right hon. Friend has pointed out, companies such as Bosch are coming to this country, not because of low wages but because of high productivity, quality manufacturing and an environment that is good for business. Do not Opposition Members have an absolute cheek to complain about the Government's record, bearing in mind that when their party was in power manufacturing output fell and productivity was appaling, whereas under the present Government manufacturing output has risen and productivity is at record levels?

Mr. Portillo: Manufacturing productivity is at record levels, as are manufacturing exports. We are a net exporter of television sets, and we are improving our position in relation to motor cars. Close to my hon. Friend's constituency in Derbyshire, Toyota is investing £750 million at Burnaston and thereby creating 3,000 new jobs. The Labour party, by shouting, demonstrates that it has no interest in new jobs, that it is interested only in running Britain down. Luckily, it will not be in power in the foreseeable future. Luckily, too, its position will not put people off who are thinking of investing in Britain.

Value Added Tax (Fuel)

12. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost in a full year to the average householder's energy bills of the introduction of value added tax at *(a)* 8 per cent. and *(b)* 17½ per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not possible to make an accurate assessment. It depends on future pricing decisions by the fuel companies as well as on the effect of those pricing decisions on consumption levels.

Mr. Loyden: How will the Minister ensure that the operation of benefits takes into account the 17·5 per cent. increase in VAT? He cannot simply rely on the retail prices index rate, which will be 8 per cent. Is not this a clear indication that the Government have no intention of meeting in full the needs of pensioners and people on low pay, who will have to pay the extra 17·5 per cent. on their bills?

Mr. Dorrell: We have said absolutely clearly that we intend to provide extra help in advance of the implementation of the price increases, and that this will be targeted at the 8 million households in receipt of income-related benefits. Assistance will go to those who need it, while the rest of us make a contribution to controlling the deficit—a matter which is of no interest at all to the Labour party.

Mrs. Browning: If the extent of uprating is to be announced in November, will my hon. Friend please take into account the fact that it should reflect the increase for a full year, including the critical winter months? I am conscious of the fact that the period between the Budget in March and the announcement in November is only eight months.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend may rest assured that in calculating the increases to be made as part of the planning of next year's uprating we shall take account of all the costs that recipients have to face in the year during which those benefits are received. Furthermore, we have made it clear that the cold weather payments system will be adjusted to take account of the VAT changes that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given the hon. Gentleman's admission with regard to standing charges, will he now tell us how much more, in pounds and pence, a typical pensioner will have to pay because of the imposition of VAT on standing charges for gas and electricity? Will he also explain the environmental justification for that imposition?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman might explain to the House why Labour thought that it was entirely consistent to impose VAT on telephone standing charges. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The simplest layman—apart, apparently, from the hon. Gentleman—can see that the standing charge for the supply of energy to a household is part of the integrated cost that has to be charged by the supplier. The hon. Gentleman is pressing upon us the creation of a blatant tax loophole—something which he does not normally like to do. I can assure him that we shall resist his pressure.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the majority of member states of the European Community levy VAT on energy costs for domestic consumers? Does he agree that in terms of energy costs the most important thing for people on low incomes is the need to keep energy prices down? Is not the statement made on Monday by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade indicative of the fact that the Government are prepared to allow the market to bring down energy costs? Will my hon. Friend also confirm that the extra money given to the coal industry will not be reflected in energy charges?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is almost right about the European Community. He said that the majority of EC member states charge VAT on domestic fuel and power. The truth is that they all charge VAT on domestic fuel and power. He is right to stress that the key issue is the price that the consumer has to pay. We are certainly accepting no lectures from the Opposition about electricity prices. Electricity prices went up by 20 per cent. every year Labour was in power and by more than a quarter in real terms.

It would be nice to hear a welcome from the Opposition for the fact that in the past 10 years, since we reformed the industries, electricity prices have fallen by 8 per cent. in real terms and gas prices have fallen by 15 per cent. in real terms. That shows our commitment to the proper pricing of energy.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mudie: Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating the Home Affairs Select Committee on its decision to inquire into party political funding? Will he also join the Opposition in urging full co-operation and disclosure—that disclosure to cover items such as the £17 million secretly paid to the Conservatives to cover the cost of the previous election?

The Prime Minister: Of course the Conservative party will submit a memorandum as requested and will of course be available to submit oral evidence. We have always said that we are consistently opposed to state aid for political parties. If the hon. Gentleman is being so sanctimonious, I hope that he might consider whether his party is truly in favour of state aid or not.

Q2. **Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sykes: Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to express his condemnation of the proposed rail strike tomorrow——

The Prime Minister *rose——[Interruption.]*

Mr. Sykes: ——and does he agree that the state monopoly should be broken up as soon as possible? Has he noticed, by the way, how many Labour Members have scurried off to their constituencies before their union paymasters go on strike tomorrow?

The Prime Minister: There is no doubt that it was worth waiting for the rest of my hon. Friend's question. I entirely agree that the strike is deplorable. What is equally deplorable is the deafening silence from the Opposition who know very well that, when it comes to strikes, they are on strike in terms of condemning them. They are still the strikers' friends.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister will, I hope, be aware of the deep disquiet in the country about the events in Srebrenica. Does he agree that it is vital that the United Nations is enabled to resume its humanitarian relief

convoys as a matter of urgency? Will the Government make it crystal clear to the Serbs that their barbaric disregard for humanity is simply not tolerable?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman on both points. We are appalled by the plight of Srebrenica. It is terrible, and we believe that the Serbs must co-operate with the United Nations humanitarian effort. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know, British aid workers and British troops have been instrumental in providing more aid in Bosnia than any other country. That is a proud record, and we wish to see it continue. I align myself entirely with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's comments about Srebrenica.

Mr. Smith: May I associate the Opposition with the tribute that the Prime Minister paid to British aid workers and British troops, who are performing an invaluable role in assisting the humanitarian effort? But does the Prime Minister accept that if there is to be a lessening of the sickening events involving innocent women and children which, sadly, we have been witnessing on our television screens, sanctions must be applied more comprehensively and effectively against Serbia, and that the international community simply must insist that humanitarian convoys be accompanied by military escorts?

The Prime Minister: I certainly support the idea that there should be much stricter enforcement of sanctions; we would be perfectly prepared to contemplate the widening of sanctions as well as the stricter enforcement of existing sanctions. That matter is under discussion between our allies and ourselves at the moment.

Mr. Fry: As we enter the era of the council tax, will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Conservative-controlled Wellingborough borough council, which is to levy an average tax of £177—by far the lowest in the country? Is that not a wonderful achievement, considering that services have not been cut, and is it not the clearest possible signal to the electorate of this country to vote Conservative in this year's local government elections?

The Prime Minister: I believe that there is widespread understanding around the country that the council tax is the fairest method that we have yet had of dealing with local government finance. Not only that, but those people who are fortunate enough to have a Conservative council will find that, band for band, they will pay less council tax than those whose council is Labour controlled.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister not realise that being appalled by Srebrenica is not good enough? Being appalled by Srebrenica will not save a single life. The question is what the Prime Minister and the British Government intend to do about Srebrenica. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that that town and its 60,000 Muslim inhabitants are designated by the Vance-Owen plan as part of the Muslim territory. Will he therefore recommend to other western powers that we protect Srebrenica from being annihilated by the Serbs—or is this to be yet another example of our standing by the side, wringing our hands and saying that nothing can be done until it is too late for anything to be done?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will weigh carefully what he says on that matter, because I think that what he has said will be deeply offensive to the 2,300 troops that we have in Bosnia, to their families and to the many other people who are concerned about their safety there. They are doing a magnificent job; in many ways we have led the assistance being given to all parts of Bosnia over recent months. We strongly welcome the Security Council resolution enforcing the no-fly zone. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will have more to say about that after Question Time.

Mr. Page: May I make my right hon. Friend aware that the trustees of the Maxwell pension fund will meet later this month to discuss the common investment fund, which now stands at about £180 million? I urge him to contact those trustees and beg them to have a distribution or a partial distribution of that fund so that, in conjunction with the Cuckney fund, the pensioners can be paid while the missing millions are traced and a long-term solution is put in place.

The Prime Minister: I certainly join my hon. Friend in urging the trustees and the liquidator of the common investment fund to restore advance payments as soon as possible. I understand the difficulties, and I hope that the trustees will be able to respond.

War Crimes (Yugoslavia)

Q3. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister when he last met the leaders of other member states of the Security Council of the United Nations to discuss the implementation of UN resolution 808; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Nations Secretary-General is due to produce a report by the end of April on the most effective and rapid means of establishing an ad hoc tribunal. United Nations member states have been invited to contribute views on an informal basis. Several states, including the United Kingdom, have so contributed.

Dr. Godman: This is the first time since Nuremberg and Tokyo that an international war crimes tribunal has been set up. Unlike Nuremberg and Tokyo, however, is it not likely that the implementation of United Nations resolution 808 will turn out to be an exercise in futility? Has not the United States State Department already labelled those murderous leaders, Milosevic and Karadzic, as potential war criminals? Are they to be granted immunity from war crimes proceedings? Who will apprehend the criminals? Will British soldiers be involved? Will British police officers and lawyers be involved? It is surely a charade.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that it will be an exercise in futility. There are complex matters of international law to be determined, which are still under discussion within the United Nations, but it is intended, where possible, to ensure that people who commit war crimes face a tribunal and are punished satisfactorily and suitably.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hendry: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the opposition of the police, my constituents and myself to the proposed all-night rave scheduled to take place in my constituency at the end of May. Does he agree that such events have less to do with entertainment than with organised crime and pushing illegal and dangerous drugs? Does he agree that the High Peak, as one of the most popular national parks in the world, is a wholly unsuitable venue for such an event? May I assure him that he has the support of the Conservative side of the House for the Government's proposal to give the police more power to tackle these people? Will he ensure that the measures are brought forward as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend touches on a point which will concern many parents. The statement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary yesterday shows beyond doubt that the Government are determined to crack down on those who ignore the rights and property of law-abiding citizens. It is wholly unacceptable behaviour. That is why we are giving the police tougher powers to deal with it.

Mr. Simpson: Is the Prime Minister aware of the report recently highlighted in the *Nottingham Evening Post*, which illustrated that claims for severe hardship payments had increased in the east midlands by over 750 per cent. in the last three years, leaving large numbers of young people with no jobs, no cash and no hope? Will he explain how he has failed to deliver jobs to those young people and when will he restore entitlement to benefit payments to them?

The Prime Minister: I should mention to the hon. Gentleman that payments from the social fund could not have been made until we introduced the legislation to do so. No such comparable payments existed. As for jobs, it is interesting to note that for the first time in several weeks —in fact, since the unemployment figures fell last time—an Opposition Member has mentioned unemployment. We continue to take measures which will seek to increase jobs for all sectors of the community.

Q5. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some mdoments ago.

Mr. Kynoch: I welcome the support given to small businesses in the recent Budget. Is my right hon. Friend aware that my area of Scotland has benefited significantly from the oil and gas industry, and in particular from oil exploration in the North sea? Is he further aware that the changes in petroleum revenue tax have provoked enormous support from my constituents? Will he ensure that the transition to what many oil companies regard as a better low tax regime is smooth and does not cause undue disturbance and disruption in the industry in the meantime?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend will know, many people have welcomed the changes in taxes, not least because of the big encouragement to development that is clearly evident in the new structure. That development will create future jobs, a matter which every hon. Member is concerned about. I take the figures from memory, but I seem to recall that in the year 1991-92 the previous petroleum revenue tax system actually cost the taxpayer £200 million net.

Mr. William Ross: Has the Prime Minister noticed that the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic said that the idea that the Republic was a haven for terrorists is a fallacy? Does he understand that my constituents were surprised about that until they realised that today is the first day of April?

The Prime Minister: I know that the hon. Gentleman feels very strongly about the matter, but I must say to him that he should not confuse the actions of a minority with the views and instincts of the majority of people. I do not believe that the majority of people in the Republic of Ireland support the activities of the IRA, and I believe that their response to recent events is a clear illustration that that is the case. I hope and believe that the vast majority of people in the Republic of Ireland will join the hon. Gentleman and every other hon. Member in the House in condemning the IRA and all its murderous activities.

Q6. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: As we approach the first anniversary of the re-election of my right hon. Friend's Government, does the Prime Minister recall that only four weeks after that event a Conservative council was elected in Basildon? What conclusions does my right hon. Friend draw from the fact that, under the council tax, Conservative Basildon will, for the first time, not be capped while nearby socialist-controlled Harlow district council will be?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has made a profession of making Basildon world famous and is doing it remarkably well. As it is also the anniversary of my hon. Friend's re-election, I offer him my congratulations on that. When he won, we knew that we had won, and it was an especially sweet victory.

It is no coincidence that a Conservative council produces a lower council tax charge than a Labour council. That is what we would expect. That is what we see in Conservative councils up and down the country at all levels of the council tax.

No-fly Zone (Bosnia)

3.30 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the military implications for Britain of the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Following the passing last night of Security Council resolution 816, which calls for the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia, the Government are actively considering the military implications. Should further violations of the no-fly zone occur, the resolution requires that all necessary measures be taken to secure compliance. It is expected that the United Nations Secretary-General will invite NATO to take on that responsibility.

In principle, the United Kingdom is willing to contribute aircraft for the enforcement task. We are discussing with NATO the nature and scale of the United Kingdom contribution and those of other nations. We hope that, as a result of the passing of the resolution and the steps which we are now taking, violations of the no-fly zone will cease.

Mr. Clark: I assure the Minister that he has the support of Labour Members in the enforcement of the no-fly zone as a symbol of the world's belief in the need to enforce United Nations resolutions and, at the same time, sending a message to the warring factions of the necessity for them to sign a peace accord.

Can the Minister explain the logic behind the intention, as I understand it, of having an Italian air force general in charge of the operation involving planes solely from the United States, the United Kingdom and France? In view of the sensitivity of this high-risk operation and the danger of it escalating, is he satisfied that the chain of command will not lead to confusion, thus placing the whole operation at risk? Does he agree that the enforcement must be completely even-handed, with the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslim supporting planes being treated in exactly the same manner?

Finally, what is the position on helicopters from any party being used for evacuation of injured personnel? Am I right in assuming that such mercy missions are permitted under the United Nations resolution?

Mr. Aitken: I am most grateful for the support which the Opposition have given on this occasion. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, that support sends a message from all parts of the House that we wish to see the forces of decency and humanity in the ascendant instead of some of the forces of evil which have created such havoc and wickedness in recent days.

The hon. Gentleman asked various questions. First, this is a United Nations operation and, therefore, the decisions on command are a matter for the United Nations and not Her Majesty's Government. In response to the hon. Gentleman's question about chain of command, I can tell him that we shall be under NATO command and control. We are satisfied that that is likely to be an entirely effective chain of command and control.

The hon. Gentleman requested that the no-fly zone should be enforced entirely even-handedly and impartially against all violators. I am sure that the United Nations will operate that policy, as the resolution indicates.

As for his question on evacuation helicopters and mercy flights, the position is difficult because exemptions to the no-fly zone can be made only by people in authority on the ground allowing those exemptions. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the issue needs to be addressed by the United Nations personnel on the ground. It is vital that mercy flights are allowed somehow or other to continue.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my hon. Friend make it plain that Serbian violation has led to the necessary passing of the resolution? Does he agree that the credibility of the international organisation is at stake because if an internationally recognised state can be extinguished, credibility goes? Does he agree further that the killing must now stop?

Mr. Aitken: I entirely agree with the view expressed by my hon. Friend. The killing must stop and all forces of decency must make every possible effort to ensure that that outcome is achieved. It is probably true that Serbian planes have committed most of the violations of the no-fly zone. However, the situation is a complex and confusing situation and there have been some other violations. So I can answer my hon. Friend's question only on the balance of probabilities, although we believe that the bombing incidents last weekend were probably caused by Serbian aircraft.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I, too, welcome the Minister's announcement. But does he accept that the declaration of the no-fly zone some months ago, followed by a lack of enforcement until now, has simply served to encourage the Bosnian Serbs to believe that the international community lacks the will and resolve to deal with them? When the hon. Gentleman looks back on those wasted months, during which atrocity has been piled on atrocity, does he feel no sense of regret that more decisive action was not taken before now?

Mr. Aitken: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question that the past few months of careful co-ordination and fine relief efforts have been wasted months. It has been a difficult situation in which certain participants in the conflict have behaved much worse and more wickedly than anyone could have expected. But the will is now there. Last night's decision to enforce the no-fly zone is an important signal which makes it clear that the will exists to deal with the recent developments of unpleasantness.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I, too, welcome the statement made by my hon. Friend. When the matter was last discussed in the House, the Government assured us that special steps and contingency plans would be arranged to ensure the continuing safety of British ground troops. Are such plans still in operation?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend can rest assured that contingency plans for the safety of our troops are under careful and constant review. We have formidable such plans because the safety of our troops is paramount.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): While welcoming the Minister's statement and fully supporting the intention to enforce the United Nations resolution, may I ask the

Minister to give the House at least a view of the rules of engagement for enforcing the no-fly zone, given in particular the technical problem with dealing with most of the incursions, which are by rotary-wing, not fixed-wing, aircraft?

Mr. Aitken: I can tell the House that enforcement action will take a graduated approach depending on the degree to which violations persist. The rules of engagement, which will be drawn up in co-ordination between the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations Protection Force and the member states concerned, will reflect some of the technical difficulties to which the hon. Gentleman rightly referred.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Can my hon. Friend assure the House that it will be made quite clear to all parties in Bosnia that, were Royal Air Force or Royal Navy aircrew to be missing on missions to enforce the no-fly zone, whether for technical or operational reasons, it would be expected by Her Majesty's Government that they would be returned safe and sound at the earliest possible date, seeing that they are conducting not warlike operations but a peace-enforcing mission on the part of the United Nations? Secondly, can my hon. Friend tell the House whether, if Royal Air Force or Royal Navy aircraft are either shot at by anti-aircraft artillery or missiles, or illuminated by radar controlling such anti-aircraft equipment, Her Majesty's aircraft will be able to take appropriate retaliatory action?

Mr. Aitken: The answer to my hon. Friend's second question is yes, aircraft of the Royal Air Force will be able to take whatever action, evasive or retaliatory, is deemed appropriate. As regards his question about aircraft which may go missing, I entirely accept his point that it is imperative that all people in that area are aware that people missing must be returned safe and sound—in accordance with the normal rules, which, as he rightly points out, are not the rules of war, because we are in a peacekeeping situation.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I say to the Minister that the tragedy of the dying over recent months and yesterday must rest uneasily on the consciences——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must caution the hon. Gentleman and any other hon. Members who wish to raise questions. This is a very limited question and it concerns the enforcement of the no-fly zone. It is not concerned with what the hon. Gentleman was leading into. I hope that he will restrict his question to the question I have allowed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My question relates directly to the failure of western Governments to act before now and I feel that I should have the right to put it. Is not the tragedy of the dying over recent months, and in particular yesterday, as reported on British television, something that must rest uneasily on the consciences of the leaders of the western democracies, who in my view have failed miserably to act over the last nine months?

Mr. Aitken: The question is about the military implications of the no-fly zone. The hon. Gentleman seeks to tempt me into political comment, which I think it is right for me not to be drawn into.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the things that is necessary to keep the aircraft flying is fuel? Is it not one of the problems that fuel is getting through up the Danube and is keeping those aircraft flying?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. However, I notice from today's news bulletins that new steps are being taken, particularly on the Danube with patrol boats, to make sure that the embargoes are not broken with the kind of frequency that they have been broken and that the fuel which gets through will be much more limited.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): We would all like to see effective international action, not just on the no-fly zone but on other issues in Bosnia as well. Is not the lesson of recent years, however, that there cannot be effective international action without an effective international consensus? That consensus does not exist in the Balkans, or wider. Against that background, is not there the danger that this will be yet another ineffective measure which will be just another cruel deception of the people of Bosnia?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman perhaps underestimates the significance of the fact that there has been a great international consensus behind these United Nations resolutions and particularly this enforcement resolution, which for the first time, as I understand it, has been given the full support of the Russian Government in taking part in what looks like being a NATO-controlled operation. The entire international community is rallying in horror against the atrocities that have been committed and is showing a new will and resolve. I hope that the message goes clearly to the malefactors.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my hon. Friend accept that the last two supplementary questions have perhaps been the most relevant? While I fully support the statement that he made to the House, as I believe the whole House overwhelmingly does, without total international consensus on not only the no-fly zone but the trade sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro which are being flagrantly breached even by members of the European Community—I refer particularly to Greece—the no-fly zone is a fraud. Will he work with his colleagues in Government and other countries throughout the world to ensure that there is total consensus so that the sanctions and the no-fly zone work together and are totally effective?

Mr. Aitken: I agree with my hon. Friend that the greater the strengthening of international consensus, the better. However, he underestimates the increasing effectiveness of the sanctions. The entire world underestimates the degree of revulsion and horror that all civilised nations are feeling, and as a result the consensus behind last night's United Nations resolution is more formidable and united than ever before.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): When were the Government persuaded to support the enforcement of the no-fly zone? If it is found to be ineffective, and the Serbians refuse to support the Vance-Owen peace plan, how much longer will the people of Bosnia have to wait for the necessary arms to defend their state against aggression sponsored by Serbia and to stop the murders, rape and ethnic cleansing?

Mr. Aitken: First, let me make it clear that the Government have no intention of relaxing the arms embargo in favour of any of the participants. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, the Government have always been ready to enforce the no-fly zone, which has been in place since October. Once the evidence was clear that the no-fly zone was being violated, we and our partners in the United Nations were willing to go ahead with the enforcement resolution which was passed last night.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Can my hon. Friend assure my constituents at RAF Strike Command and their families that any actions asked of British service men will be within international law and that those service men will be given military objectives which are both clearly defined and attainable?

Mr. Aitken: I am glad to give my hon. Friend and his constituents that assurance.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Minister agree that what has been said today shows that the British Government are getting deeper into the war zone? Does he accept that one reason why he said what he did today was to safeguard the British troops who some people said would have to be safeguarded if we went in? Does he accept that the contending armies and forces on the ground for whom the no-fly zone has been implemented are using arms, artillery and weapons mainly, but not entirely, from Common Market countries? Does he accept that Croatia gets most of its arms from Germany? Much of it is from east Germany and is channelled through west Germany because a hell of a lot of artillery is going spare there—millions of pounds worth. British forces are now supposed to try and keep the peace and are getting more deeply involved while those fighting on the ground are being assisted by Common Market countries. The truth is that the new world order which they talked about grandly three years ago at the end of the Gulf war is nowhere to be found because some Common Market countries, led by Germany, are ensuring that Croatia is armed to the teeth.

Mr. Aitken: I believe that the hon. Gentleman's comments are misguided and in sharp contrast to the constructive contribution made by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). Of course, it is true that this enforcement action involves some risks. On the radio this morning the hon. Member for South Shields described it as a calculated risk. It is a calculation made in the interests of humanity, decency and upholding the right and proper standards of the international consensus against the forces of evil.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Will my hon. Friend go a little further in confirming that the command and control structure under which our military forces will be operating is a NATO one? Does he agree that that clearly demonstrates the importance of the training given in NATO to working together and that it will increase the safety of our men in these operations?

Mr. Aitken: I agree and confirm the point made by my hon. Friend. As I said in my main answer to the private notice question, we expect that the Secretary-General will invite NATO to take on the enforcement responsibility. In that situation, it will be NATO's tried and trusted command and control systems which will operate the enforcement of the no-fly zone.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Minister aware that the imposition of a no-fly zone should be but a minimum step by the international community, under the authority of the United Nations, to protect those most at risk from continued Serbian aggression and crimes, which are almost at the level of the sort of crimes committed in Yugoslavia during the second world war? Is the Minister further aware that if such crimes and atrocities that he has spoken about—and rightly deplored—continue, the international community will be expected to do more? We cannot wash our hands of the terrible things that are happening which are crimes against humanity. This country has a responsibility, as does the United Nations.

Mr. Aitken: The Secretary-General of the United Nations will be reporting by 22 April on one part of the hon. Gentleman's question. In terms of the overall situation, we believe that the no-fly zone enforcement will send an important signal to those who have been perpetrating the greatest evil and wickedness. In addition, it will stop some of the aerial bombing, which has been another miserable feature of this wretched conflict.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Because of the close bonds between the Slavic peoples, and in particular between Serbia and Russia, does my hon. Friend agree that it is essential to keep Russia supportive and that failure to do so would make enforcement almost impossible? Does he further agree that there are dangerous implications for Russian domestic politics, because if we have a NATO conflict with Serbia, it could encourage the hard-liners in Russia and undo all the work that has been done on reforms?

Mr. Aitken: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that Russian support for the international consensus is of very great importance. As I said a few moments ago, I welcome the support of Russia for this enforcement resolution. It is also important that Russia, through diplomatic channels, continues to keep up pressure on the Serbian leadership. I am pleased to be able to report that the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, Mr. Churkin, is in Belgrade and I hope that he is urging a more humanitarian and sensible line on the Serbian leadership.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): In an ethnic conflict, is not it important that any involvement we have should be even-handed, particularly for those people in Serbia who are opposed to what their forces are doing? Their position would be advanced in Serbia if it was seen that action was also levelled against excesses by Croats and Muslims.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman makes an entirely valid point. Several different parties and combatants are involved in the confused situation. There is a difference between some elements of the Serb leadership, who seem to on the side of the appalling atrocities and ethnic cleansing, and the large number—perhaps a majority—of decent Serbian people who thoroughly oppose what some of the leaders and soldiers are doing. The hon. Gentleman's distinction is well taken.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Are there any plans to send more British troops to the area at present?

Will Britain alone be responsible for financing its part in the operation, or will that cost be spread among others, which would show a more international involvement in the important operation?

Mr. Aitken: The cost-sharing burdens, which are still to be worked out, are likely to be on a United Nations basis. To answer my hon. Friend's first question, no plans and no decisions have been made about the possibility of sending additional British troops to former Yugoslavia.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): While welcoming the United Nations resolution on the enforcement of the no-fly zone, I understand that it is the first time that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has been involved in that way. Given that the British are in command of the rapid reaction force under NATO, what are the implications for the rapid reaction force of the resolution and decision? Does the Minister rule out the involvement of that force in the conflict in former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Aitken: I do not think that it is wise to be drawn into hypothetical and contingency ideas. There are certainly no immediate implications for the rapid reaction force, but the sort of planning that we currently envisage involves a NATO command and control structure and a Royal Air Force contribution to the force of aircraft that will patrol and enforce the no-fly zone.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my hon. Friend agree that, as we rightly raise the stakes to tackle aggression, so we raise the risks faced daily by our aid workers and the British soldiers who support them? Does he agree that those who accuse this country of doing nothing should reflect deeply on the volumes of aid that have reached the people in Bosnia and former Yugoslavia as a result of the courage and commitment of British aid workers and British forces, which is why they should be paramount in our British policy?

Mr. Aitken: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Britain has made a remarkable success of its humanitarian operations—both of the humanitarian aid workers and of the convoys escorted by our forces. Our battalion group has escorted 403 convoys carrying 32,000 tonnes of aid. Those escorting duties have involved considerable risks, which may increase as a result of the no-fly zone enforcement action that has now been taken, although we are making contingency plans to protect our troops against escalation of those risks as far as possible. My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the courage and devotion of our aid workers, who have done so well in an impossibly difficult situation.

Business of the House

3.57 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for the first week after the recess?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for the first week after the recess will be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL—Second Reading of the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*.

THURSDAY 15 APRIL—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 20th day.

FRIDAY 16 APRIL—There will be a debate on the partnership between the public and private sectors in delivering local government services, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 19 APRIL—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 21st day.

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement and I am sure that everyone will be pleased to know that we have another two days on Maastricht ahead of us after Easter.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate in Government time on the efficient and effective use of public money? Does he appreciate that on the day we are seeing at least the partial disappearance of the poll tax, on which £14 billion to £16 billion worth of public money was wasted, we are also seeing reports of millions being wasted on computerisation in the Wessex health authority, money wasted in the Ministry of Defence and money apparently wasted on the activities of the Inland Revenue as a consequence of the rushed privatisation of its postal deliveries? As all this waste and mismanagement flows from actions related to Government policy, it is appropriate that such a debate be scheduled in Government time. May I press on him that that debate should be over and above the debate for which the Labour party has repeatedly pressed, in which the House is allowed to examine the details of the Government's public expenditure programme? He knows that the debate is outstanding and that we are anxious to have it.

Does the Leader of the House recall that we pressed for a debate on London affairs? Again, in the light of the recent announcement on what is happening in the London ambulance service, it is important to give scope for further debates on a number of issues of concern to those in the capital city.

Finally, I again remind the right hon. Gentleman that we are pressing for a day of Opposition time.

Mr. Newton: I am rather relieved that the right hon. Lady started by welcoming the two further days on Maastricht. I am sure that that view is widely held on both sides of the House, but it is perhaps in conflict with her later demands for a whole series of debates on other matters, to which I am not in a position to respond as fully as she would like, despite the great good will with which I approach the Easter recess. I note her various requests. I am not sure whether it was in her list today, or whether she left it out, but she has before asked for some general

[Mr. Newton]

Opposition time as well. I tried to respond in a reasonably forthcoming way about that last week. I will rest on that relatively friendly point.

I should point out, however, that two of the debates that the right hon. Lady demanded will take place later tonight—albeit, I accept, not formally in Government or Opposition time. By kind permission of Madam Speaker, there is no less than three hours on Government policies in greater London and the south-east, which should be reached at a reasonable hour of the night, and a little later on—possibly at a less reasonable hour, or even close to breakfast time—a debate on the conduct of Ministers in relation to the London ambulance service. If the right hon. Lady is willing to lose a little more sleep than she did the other night, when I was still here, she can join in those debates.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I am sure that the House appreciates the constraints on my right hon. Friend and the good-hearted way in which he approaches them. However, it is four weeks today since the end of the Committee stage of the National Lottery etc. Bill and there are many good causes outside the House waiting for Report and Third Reading. Could we have a date for that soon?

Mr. Newton: I am mindful of the fact that my hon. Friend asked me about this last week or the week before. I am looking for time to complete the remaining stages of the Bill. Without making further extensive reference to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, I hope my hon. Friend will understand that I have to make finely balanced judgments about the order of events.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): As someone who has been trying to facilitate a bit of progress on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, may I ask the Leader of the House to confirm that he will be able to announce at an early stage that there is to be a summer recess, never mind the dates for it? On a more serious note, after Easter will he arrange for a statement or a debate in Government time on the general agreement on tariffs and trade because the American Government and the new French Government will have an impact on that matter, which is regarded as important by Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Newton: On the hon. Gentleman's latter question, I confirm that that is an important matter. He will know that there are continued efforts, in which the British Government very much play their proper part, to ensure a successful outcome of the negotiations. I cannot promise a debate, but I will bear the hon. Gentleman's request in mind. As to his first question, I thank him for the constructive role that he and many of his colleagues have played in our proceedings. He deserves a holiday, perhaps more than some others in the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I still have another statement to call and private Members' time is precious. Therefore, in order that we might proceed swiftly, will hon. Members put one brisk question which can be given a brisk answer?

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): May we have an early debate on the cost and quality of water, a subject which would be of great interest to all hon. Members and our constituents? I ask for that against the background of the paper issued by Mr. Ian Byatt, the director general of Ofwat, and the open letter that he has now addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Newton: I have not yet seen the letter addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend, but I think that I know what is in my hon. Friend's mind and I well understand that. He will know that the EC will be considering the revision of the water directive later this year. I can assure him that the United Kingdom Government will be making their view known as part of that process and ensuring that the Commission is made aware of the cost of meeting any new standards which might be considered in the course of that review.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): When we have the debate on the use of taxpayers' money for which my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) pressed so eloquently, may we debate ministerial perks? How can the Secretary of State for Social Security justify a sum 10 times the cost of a flight from his holiday home in France to return to ministerial meetings at Westminster?

Mr. Newton: I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will take note of the hon. Gentleman's point. I did not—rather clearly, I think—promise the debate for which the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) asked, nor am I promising it to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): Should the new French Government fail to get to grips with their pirate fishermen, and should the Royal Navy find it necessary to take a dozen of them at random and shoot them during the recess, will my right hon. Friend recall the House so that we can discuss not just that but the failure of the entire common fisheries policy?

Mr. Newton: It would be quite likely that, were the event that my hon. Friend postulates to take place, I should need to arrange a debate. Therefore, for a variety of reasons, including that one, I rather hope that it will not. My hon. Friend will be aware of the action taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to impress on the French Government our concern about these matters. That is perhaps the proper way to deal with them.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): It will not be Frenchmen that oil workers in the north-east of Scotland will want to shoot.

Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer so that he can retract and dissociate himself from the comments of a senior Treasury official yesterday, who said that for 10,000 job losses we are securing £400 million to £500 million in extra taxation? I know that it is 1 April and that the Chancellor is having difficulty with figures, but is that some sick joke being perpetrated on the north-east of Scotland? Are the Government really arguing that that is a price well worth paying for additional oil taxation? Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate as soon as possible after Easter so that now that those figures are becoming known Conservative Members for the

north-east of Scotland who supported the measure and Labour Members who abstained in the vital vote will have the opportunity to reconsider, along with the Government, that damaging tax on the oil industry?

Mr. Newton: I have three comments which I hope, Madam Speaker, will be as crisp as you would wish. First, the hon. Gentleman will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said not very long ago. Secondly, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has just been here answering questions and I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman sought to ask him that. Thirdly, the Finance Bill is coming rapidly down the track and I should have thought that that would give plenty of opportunity for debate on those matters.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of Members on both sides of the House are grateful to him for arranging a debate on tourism on 19 March? Is he further aware that in that debate the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage said that he would welcome a debate on that subject once a year rather than every five years as has been the case up until now? Can my right hon. Friend find it in his heart to facilitate that in future?

Mr. Newton: One of the things that one becomes aware of in this job is that gratitude for what one has already done rapidly translates into a demand for yet more, but I will bear that request in mind.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): As the Leader of the House will know, yesterday their Lordships endorsed the European Court of Justice judgment that the Shops Act 1950 was and remains valid. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange a debate on the Attorney-General's future action, to determine whether the Attorney-General will now assist local authorities to enforce the 1950 Act or whether he will fold his arms, do nothing and allow massive law-breaking to continue for the next 12 months?

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge the position following the judgment in another place, but the situation in respect of enforcing the 1950 Act remains the same. If a local authority has evidence that the law is being broken, it must consider whether to issue a summons or to seek an injunction. It is neither for me nor for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to tell a local authority the action to take in a particular case.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Should enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia announced this afternoon not have the desired effect, will my right hon. Friend arrange a change in the business of the House in the week when it returns after Easter so that it may debate that extremely important and serious matter?

Mr. Newton: It would be wrong for me to speculate on hypothetical questions, but in considering business after Easter the Government will clearly bear in mind developments on that or any other front during the recess.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): May I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House early-day motion 1563 on affordable housing, signed by 98 right hon. and hon. Members of all parties?

[That this House believes that social housing must be affordable by people on low incomes and views with concern the Government's stated objectives to reduce Housing Association Grant levels to 55 per cent. by 1995; notes that the ability of housing associations to deliver affordable housing could be seriously eroded and fears that a significant proportion of housing association tenants in work will have to pay more than 40 per cent. of their net disposable income in rent and that there will be a growing dependence on housing benefit; commends the NFHA's initiative in launching the Affordable Housing Campaign; and calls upon the Government to make every effort to ensure that the principle of affordable rented housing for those in housing need is upheld.]

Although that subject is due to be discussed tonight, the debate is unlikely to be reached at a reasonable or even an unreasonable time—or even by breakfast time tomorrow. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore arrange a debate as soon as possible after the recess on that vitally important issue, which is of real concern due to steep rises in rents and the affordability problems suffered by thousands of tenants throughout the country?

Mr. Newton: I know that the hon. Gentleman, who is an assiduous Member of Parliament, will be in the Chamber in the hope that his debate is reached so that he can develop his points at greater length. For my part, I can only say that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has not taken any decisions on grant rates beyond next year and will not do so until proper assessments have been made of the likely impact on rents and the ability to attract private finance.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Given the imminence of local government elections, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the welcome debate on local government issues the Friday after the House returns will enable right hon. and hon. Members to compare and contrast the efficiency and plain dealing of Conservative councils with the inefficiency and corruption of many Labour authorities?

Mr. Newton: There must be a good chance of that, but what is in order will depend on the view of the occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If the Leader of the House will not tell the Secretary of State for Social Security to come to the House to answer on the question of the £4,000 that the taxpayer is having to foot to allow the Secretary of State to fly from his holiday cottage in France to return to Britain, will the Leader of the House ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to explain his conduct, because that right hon. Gentleman has been to the Secretary of State's holiday cottage and it cost the taxpayer £2,000 for him to fly back—when both right hon. Gentlemen could have flown back for £200 apiece? Why are the Government so arrogant and contemptuous of the British people? They tell those applying for a social security loan that they had better pay the money back, and quick, and poll tax payers are told the same, yet those two Ministers are charging the British taxpayer £6,000 for flying back from France. It is time that they paid that money back.

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman seeking a debate on that matter when the House returns?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: In that case, the hon. Gentleman might like to complete his question, recognising that these are business questions.

Mr. Newton: There are well established rules governing what is reasonable and appropriate in such matters. There must necessarily be some provision of that kind, unless it is to be supposed that Ministers are never to be allowed to leave the country.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree, on the day the council tax is introduced, that it would be appropriate to debate soon regional variations in the charges set? Is my right hon. Friend aware that not only are Wandsworth and Westminster setting low charges but the flagship Hinckley and Bosworth borough council has set the lowest rate in the whole of the midlands? Should not such points be on record and debated?—[HON. MEMBERS : "Hear, hear."] My hon. Friends make their point adequately. They are saying that they want to debate that issue.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House—and, I hope, the country—of a very important point. If I remember rightly what my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) said during Prime Minister's Question Time, however, I sense that there may be a certain amount of disagreement in the midlands about which area has the lowest charge.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I press the Leader of the House for an early debate on foreign affairs? Such a debate would allow the Foreign Secretary to report on, among other things, what success he has had in persuading the Indian Government to allow Amnesty International freely to investigate human rights violations in India. The matter has been made more important by the murder on 3 March of Mrs. Hamida Mattoo, who was gunned down by Indian security forces in Indian-occupied Kashmir, apparently for no other reason than that she was the sister of Dr. Mehraj Mattoo, the British-based Kashmiri human rights campaigner. Will the Leader of the House urge the Foreign Secretary to make urgent inquiries into the murder, and to report to the House?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is aware of the case, and of the wider point that the hon. Gentleman has made. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Foreign Secretary will be here to answer questions on the day of our return from the recess, although I accept that that will not constitute a debate.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill will take up no less than half the House's time during the week of our return from the recess. Would it not show a much better sense of priorities, which would be well understood in the country as a whole, if the House debated either the armed forces or the Royal Navy on the motion to approve the defence estimates? We have not debated defence estimates in relation to the armed forces since October 1991, and we have not debated the Royal Navy in that context since June 1991. Her Majesty's forces are currently operational in the Adriatic, Bosnia and Croatia, and the House needs to debate the strategic context in which they are carrying out their duties.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend raised a similar point with me a week or two ago. I cannot add to what I told him then. I said that I would attempt to find time for a debate on at least some of the matters in which he is interested, but I cannot yet give definite dates. I should point out that we are not spending half the week of our return on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill—it is really one third of the week, as one third of our time will be spent happily in Adjournment.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House be able to make an early statement on the procedure to be used during debate on the Finance Bill in regard to voting on the measure giving extra tax relief to Lloyd's names? It should be borne in mind that nearly 50 Conservative Members, including three Cabinet Ministers, are Lloyd's names. Would it not be right for the right hon. Gentleman to exclude those Members from voting on a measure which could benefit them personally?

Mr. Newton: Such questions are certainly not for the Leader of the House to decide at the Dispatch Box, and I do not intend to try.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): May we have a debate immediately after Easter on the most important and dangerous threat with which the world is now faced—the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the 30 unstable small states which already possess ballistic missiles? There is clear evidence that the Prime Minister is changing his view of the British position on testing nuclear weapons and is coming round to the idea of a test ban. May we have a debate, so that the Prime Minister can tell the House that Britain is to stop being one of the only two countries in the world—the other is China—which continue to test nuclear weapons?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate on those matters, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will seek to catch the Speaker's eye at some stage during Prime Minister's questions and attempt to put that point to my right hon. Friend directly.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the right hon. Gentleman impress on his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security the urgent need for an early statement—if possible, during the first week after the recess—about the Government's response to the judgment made earlier this week by the European Court of Justice in case C-328/91, in which the court found against the Department of Social Security in respect of equal treatment in the payment of invalidity benefit? Many thousands of women aged 60 or more suffered very badly when they lost invalidity benefit, or had it reduced. Many are sick or disabled. The Government should act honourably by implementing the court's decision and paying those women the original amount.

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly draw that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman will know—certainly I do from my experience—that in recent years the Government have put a great deal of effort into improving equality of treatment under the benefits system generally.

Valleys Initiative

4.19 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the valleys initiative.

Yesterday, the programme for the valleys—announced by my predecessor, Lord Walker, five years ago—came to an end. The achievements are extensive. First, over 7,000 homes have been improved through enveloping and repair schemes. Secondly, over 2,000 acres of derelict land have been cleared by the Welsh Development Agency, in the largest land clearance programme undertaken anywhere in Europe. Thirdly, nearly £700 million of additional private sector investment has been secured, involving 24,000 jobs. Fourthly, 2·6 million sq ft of new industrial floor space have been created. Fifthly, the most successful of all the national garden festivals was held at Ebbw Vale and another unique festival—Valleys Live '92—promoted, which celebrated the refurbishment of many arts centres under the programme.

Today I am pleased to announce not only that the programme will indeed continue until 1998, but that, over the five-year period, total public expenditure under the programme for the valleys is expected to be well over £1,000 million. Urban and economic expenditure, for instance, is currently running at £175 million, and will continue at that rate through 1993-94.

The most important development over the last five years has, I believe, been the strengthening of local initiative. Many valley communities are now able to work up their own strategies for development and to put together partnerships to implement them.

I want today's launch of the new programme to mark a distinct change in style. The emphasis must shift away from centralised initiatives towards a dynamic and evolving programme, based on local strategies, that responds to the needs and opportunities of local communities and increasingly is driven by local people. I shall therefore be using the full range of the Welsh Office's responsibilities, together with the local authorities and the Welsh Development Agency, to empower local partnerships to implement local strategies.

Thanks to the programme for the valleys, there is now tremendous co-ordination of all the public money being spent in the area. I believe that there is, truly, a vision for the valleys. That vision is promoted by generous sums of taxpayers' money.

The new programme for the valleys will be founded upon a clear set of aims. Every project under the programme will be evaluated on the basis of the following six aims: to create long-term, sustainable employment of improved quality; to make that employment accessible to all the people of the valleys through education, training and transport facilities; to improve the quality of the environment and to maintain it, both as an attraction to business and tourism and, of course, for the benefit of the people of the valleys; to target national health resources more effectively and to establish a health innovation zone for the valleys; to improve the quality and variety of housing; and to encourage local people to take the lead, in partnership with the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, local councils and the commercial and voluntary sectors.

I believe that there is now widespread agreement that the key to success will be strategies which tackle the local needs of the people of the valleys and the formation of positive partnerships to implement these strategies. That is how we shall strengthen the sense of community and shared values which has always typified the Welsh valleys.

The WDA's urban development business plan for the coming year will build on the partnership approach through further joint activities with local councils and the private sector. Towns where early urban development investment is planned include Pontardawe, Ammanford, Ystradgynlais, Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd, Porth, Tonypandy, Abertillery, Blackwood, Crumlin, Newbridge, Tredegar and Ebbw Vale.

Investment aimed at attracting employment to the valleys should now develop the concept of industrial villages. This is an exciting new idea, and I gladly pay tribute to its many enthusiastic advocates on the Opposition Benches. The WDA is giving increasing attention to supporting the growth of indigenous business in the valleys. Valleys communities must not be relegated to dormitory towns feeding the M4 or the coastal fringe. To help attract employment opportunities to communities, I will encourage local authorities to make full use of the simplified planning zone procedures.

Through a whole range of projects, this new programme will improve the quality of life throughout the valleys. Welsh Development International has established a dedicated team of executives to promote inward investment to the valleys. My Department is participating, with local councils, British Rail and the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, in a joint study of the potential for improved links to Cardiff bay. The road network within the valleys will continue to be improved. Major trunk road improvements are planned for the A470 and the A465, and a bypass for Tredegar will start in 1993-94.

New funding arrangements for higher education have today extended eligibility for research funding to the university of Glamorgan. Part of the programme of grants to assist the Welsh language will be specifically targeted at two valleys areas—the Gwendraeth valley and the Taff Ely valley. Local communities will be encouraged to play a more active role through a further round of the very successful community revival strategy. I shall be inviting new bids in the spring and selecting successful schemes in the autumn. Over the next five years, I plan to invest some £9·25 million in new community hospitals at Ebbw Vale and Torfaen. In 1993-4, local councils associated with the valleys programme will have available to them over £123 million by way of support for their housing programmes. On top of that, Housing for Wales will generate investment of over £40 million to provide new social housing in the valleys next year.

At the site of the extremely successful Ebbw Vale national garden festival, the first new urban village in Wales will be developed. The environment will continue to be improved through the WDA's land reclamation work in the valleys. The WDA is on course to clear all important dereliction in the valleys in three years. The valleys forest initiative will be strengthened. Tourism and leisure will be encouraged under the programme. New community arts facilities will build on the success of Valleys Live. An outdoor activities initiative will be a major new Sports Council for Wales Enterprise for the valleys in the coming

[Mr. David Hunt]

financial year. Initially, this will provide increased opportunities for outdoor pursuit activities for children living in the northern valleys area, around Merthyr Tydfil.

The Sports Council for Wales is also working on detailed plans for the development of centres of excellence, which would cover six sports in each of the proposed new unitary authorities. There could therefore, in time, be 36 centres of excellence in place in the valleys.

In the course of this year, the programme will be incorporated into the wider strategy for industrial south Wales, which is currently under development as a framework for the EC's structural funds from 1994 onwards. I will actively encourage and support the take-up of European funds in the valleys. I am determined to see the valleys take a prominent place in Europe. The WDA will be developing its links with Europe, and I expect further links to be made between local strategies in the valleys and corresponding areas elsewhere in the European Community.

This new, five-year programme presents a fresh challenge, opens up new opportunities, and sets a new direction for economic and social regeneration. I particularly welcome the creation of a Valleys Forum, driven by local people, to give a unified voice to all the organisations which are active in the valleys. As it evolves, this body could play a vital role in the future of the valleys, and I look forward to meeting the forum at the earliest opportunity.

This programme should mark the beginning of a new age in the south Wales valleys—an age of ambitions realised, of growing assertiveness and prosperity, and of a generation looking forward to better health and economic prospects than any generation before.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Although I acknowledge that the valleys programme came to an end—I think—yesterday, the timing of this statement could have been better. Of course all hon. Members welcome any new resources for our valleys, just as we have welcomed the various initiatives over the past few years, but any factory building programme, capital schemes or plans for redevelopment in south Wales must have the co-operation of all political parties in the Principality.

Does the Secretary of State accept that we shall need to examine his plans in great detail to ascertain how much of the money is new money and how much is essentially repackaging of plans already in existence? The hospitals in Ebbw Vale and Torfaen, the plans for the redevelopment of some towns and villages in the valleys and the plans for transport development are already very much on the cards in any event. The plans that the Secretary of State has announced are in no way new plans.

We fear that the Secretary of State's proposals do not go far enough; nor do they tackle the fundamental, underlying problems of the valleys. I know that he understands the enormous unemployment problems in our valley towns, which cost the taxpayer almost £300 million a year and whole generations of young people any hope for the future. Whatever reductions in the jobless he might point to, the south Wales valleys still rank as some of the worst black spots in the country.

Does he remember that his predecessor, now Lord Walker, told the House on 14 June 1988:

"The levels of Government aid envisaged over the next three years would on past experience create over £1 billion of private investment and 25,000 to 30,000 additional jobs."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 170.]

They have not come, and unemployment has risen during the valleys programme by almost 12 per cent. Does he accept that he has given the House no specific commitment to create jobs, and no real figures? Is he not aware that the valleys have suffered a double blow not only in the loss of our traditional coal and steel jobs but in the decline of the manufacturing and engineering jobs which were meant to replace them?

We welcome the Secretary of State's adoption of our proposals for one-stop shops for local enterpreneurs and industrial villages. A fortnight ago, my hon. Friends the Members for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I met Bruce Millan in Brussels—I understand that the Secretary of State is to do the same—to discuss the need for special European funds for the south Wales valleys. Does the Secretary of State agree that the valleys need a unique type of grant, and that any loss of assisted area status in south Wales generally would have a most serious and detrimental effect on the economy of the south Wales valleys?

Above all, does he realise that the regeneration of the south Wales valleys must ultimately involve a partnership between the Government, properly funded agencies and councils? How can we have a valleys programme when the Welsh Development Agency is concentrating on property development and raising rents to levels beyond the reach of most valley people? How on earth can his initiative be meaningful when he has cut the resources to our valley local authorities? Far from reducing spending, can he not see that one of the best ways to revitalise our valley communities is to build houses by releasing the capital receipts in local authority coffers, repair roads and bridges in the valleys, clean up our towns and stop dereliction in our villages?

Will he acknowledge that the cuts in education and training which he has introduced in the past few weeks will negate any good that might come from this or any other initiative or programme?

Finally, does the Secretary of State not accept that without proper funding of the valley councils, without a recognition that the traditionally radical people of the valleys find the increasing use of government by quango scandalous, and without a long-term vision for our valleys that is both bold and imaginative, the announcement can be seen only as both superficial and cosmetic?

Mr. Hunt: That is the first time that I have ever heard £1,000 million called "cosmetic". That description merely shows how economically illiterate the Labour party is.

The first thing that the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) said was that the timing of the statement could have been better. I do not know what he means by that. Yesterday the old programme came to an end and today the new programme starts. What better timing could there be than that? I should have thought that he should welcome the statement rather than disparaging it.

The hon. Gentleman's next question was how much new money there was, as if Labour Members and I should take a fleet of lorries down to the Royal Mint in Llantrisant and load them up with something called new money. What we are talking about is nothing so silly. We are talking about £1,000 million in resources over the next five years, and most of the details have not yet been

announced. Not only shall I ensure that resources are directed through existing programmes, but, as I have already said, I have several new programmes which I believe will provide a new focus and better targeting.

The hon. Gentleman's next point was that there were no new plans in the statement. Of course, there is a whole range of new plans. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it one way and then claim tribute the other way. He said that I needed the co-operation of all the political parties to achieve a proper partnership in the valleys, and I accept that. That is why I have accepted two ideas as part of the plans that I have announced—the concept of industrial villages and the concept of the one-stop shop. I paid tribute to the Labour party in that connection, and I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman might have acknowledged that.

Mr. Murphy: I did.

Mr. Hunt: Yes, but the hon. Gentleman might have acknowledged it rather than saying that there were no new plans. Those are new plans, and we are talking about a new programme.

In relation to European Community funding, I saw the Commissioner here in the same week in which the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues were travelling off to Brussels. Had the Opposition checked, they would have found out that he was giving evidence to one of the Select Committees of the House. I saw the Commissioner here just a few hours before Opposition Members went over to Brussels to see him, and I said exactly the same. I told him that I wanted to find a way within European funds of maximising receipts for the valleys by treating them as a special case. The Commissioner and I agreed to have exploratory discussions to ensure that that can happen.

The hon. Member for Torfaen went on to disparage what he called government by quango, and to call the Welsh Development Agency—in his terminology, I suppose that that is our premier quango—merely a property agency collecting high rents. That is disgraceful. Many people who work in the Welsh Development Agency are totally dedicated to the full range of programmes, and they will resent the hon. Gentleman's attempt to disparage the agency. In the coming financial year, the WDA will have a record budget in cash terms and in real terms—more than £170 million. I believe that that is a good investment.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me where the jobs were. He cannot have listened. I said that one of the achievements of the programme has been nearly £700 million in additional private sector investment secured, involving 24,000 jobs. Whereas unemployment in many parts of the world, including, sadly, the United Kingdom as a whole, has risen since the programme for the valleys was launched by Lord Walker five years ago—in the United Kingdom it has risen by 30 per cent., and it has risen in the United States, in France, in Canada, in Australia and in many other countries—in the valleys unemployment has fallen. Unemployment in the valleys is now half a percentage point lower than when the programme started. That means that there are now 10,500 more people in work in the valleys than there would have been if unemployment there had followed the national trend. That is a great tribute to my predecessor, Lord Walker.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, unlike the negative attitude from the Opposition Benches, his statement will be warmly welcomed within the Ystradgynlais valley community that I represent in the House? That community has enthusiastically taken on board the valleys initiative and the successes are there to be seen. May I inform my right hon. Friend that his initiative for community involvement will be welcomed in Ystradgynlais where the Ystradgynlais 2000 project, a truly community-based project, has had Welsh Office support and endorsement, and has also recently had an environmental Wales award? In regard to his discussions with the European Commissioner, can my right hon. Friend confirm that European projects will be additional to the announcement that he has made today?

Hon. Members: Yes or no?

Mr. Hunt: I say yes to that. European-funded programmes in the valleys will be truly additional. I shall work to maximise the valleys' share of the available resources.

On my hon. Friend's first point, I recognise that he has always strongly represented the claims of Ystradgynlais. The community revival strategy, which is a new programme, has worked exceedingly well, and I want to see it continue.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Can the Secretary of State confirm that he has just said that any European funds will be in addition to those that he announced in the statement? If they are, there will be a warm welcome, but we should like detail on that.

When I saw that there was to be a statement today, I, together with many other hon. Members, hoped for an announcement of new and effective changes. I record with regret the fact that, in so many respects, we got a reannouncement of other reannouncements.

The statement means that phase 2 of the valleys initiative is, like its predecessor, likely to be in many respects a cosmetic package that will not reverse the downward trend of Government support for regions, cuts in training and the reductions in real terms for local authorities serving the valleys and other parts of Wales.

Does the Secretary of State recall that, just this week, we heard that counties covering the valleys, like others in Wales, are to lose millions from their budgets in the current financial year for social services and education? That must contradict the purpose which he said he had of trying to rejuvenate and reinvigorate the valley communities.

If the Secretary of State wants to take tangible initiatives, may I ask him yet again to allow councils in the valleys to spend their own money on house building and house improvement to generate real jobs and regenerate communities? Will he reverse training cuts in vocational training for unemployed people and people in jobs, to give them the real means to find work for themselves in their valley communities? Without those developments, the statement will deserve the title offered by my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) of yet another cosmetic package.

Mr. Hunt: The right hon. Gentleman lives in a different world. [HON. MEMBERS: "In Ealing."] I do not know where Ealing is, but he lives in a different world. Many of the things he said are untrue. On the first point, on

[Mr. Hunt]

additionality, I have made it clear that European funds coming to Wales are genuinely additional. If the right hon. Gentleman referred to the departmental report for next year, he would see that I have allocated £70 million to meet the Welsh Office share of those genuinely additonal funds.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me to allow councils to use their receipts. As he knows, the autumn statement gave a special dispensation whereby receipts realised this year since the autumn statement can be utilised. His comment about social service cuts is made on a day when a new innovative programme called care in the community is coming in. One county council which I believe has done most to implement the new strategy is Mid Glamorgan county council. He would have done better to pay tribute to that, because the strategic framework document that Mid Glamorgan county council has produced is a model of what can be achieved. It has been produced in conjunction not only with voluntary organisations but with the health authority and the Family Health Services Authority. It is about time that the right hon. Gentleman started to pay tribute to the work of local authorities instead of disparaging the partnership.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am now seeking brisk exchanges, and questions and answers. I must safeguard the other business of the House, which concerns private Members.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I do not live in the valleys or represent any part of them, but does my right hon. Friend agree that the generous help that he has announced today in the five-year programme will provide benefit to the whole of Wales, will encourage Wales as a community, will foster the language, will foster the sense of community, will generate increased interest in sport and will generally improve the life style of everyone in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. In years to come, the rest of Europe, which has already expressed great interest in the transformation that has taken place in the valleys, and the rest of the world will come to see the model of how to move from industrial dereliction to new, vibrant, growing communities. That model will be found in the valleys, where, thanks to the communities, the local people, the local authorities, the Welsh Development Agency, the Welsh Office and all the partners combining, it has been an enormous success. We used to have 214 coal mines in the valleys; we now have three. We have not looked back; we have looked forward to the future, and the rest of the world will pay tribute to the valleys for that.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): While the continuation of the valleys initiative is welcome, does the Secretary of State agree that there is a need for a shift of emphasis to the provision of jobs for men with traditional skills and a good record of hard work who continue to face the loss of jobs in the old standard industries of Wales? Will he further agree that an appropriate way for some small part at least of the valleys initiative money to be spent would be on the restoration and preservation of some of the fine miners' institutes which have served Wales so well and which are such an important part of our architecture? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): He does not know what the Secretary of State is talking about.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He did not hear the statement.

Mr. Carlile: Yes, I did.

Mr. Hunt: I do not wish to intervene in the private war on the Opposition Benches, but the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is right. The Valleys Live arts festival, which has been a tremendous success, was based on the refurbishment of seven of those main cultural centres where the old cultural life of the valleys can be seen.

On the new programmes, the training and enterprise councils covering the valley areas will develop new initiatives on unemployment, such as opportunity shops, to give local people access to new training employment opportunities, and outreach projects to promote employment, enterprise and training.

I must pay tribute to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). We have learnt a great deal from some of the suggestions which he has made. I recognise the problem that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery has mentioned.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his splendid announcement today is the icing on the cake for Wales on a day which has seen hospitals attain trust status, schools attain grant-maintained status, the introduction of care in the community and the replacement of the poll tax by the council tax? Is he as dismayed as I am that the shadow Opposition spokesman on Welsh affairs chose today of all days to hobnob with his union bosses in the TUC?

Mr. Hunt: I was unaware of that; no reason had been given for the non-attendance of the shadow Secretary of State for Wales. If he is indeed meeting the TUC in Wales today, I hope that he is asking unions not to strike and not to cause the problems that will arise from the industrial action tomorrow. The sad fact is that Labour Members are still scared of Arthur Scargill and will not condemn the strike. I agree that today is a great day, when we are bringing power closer to the people through a whole range of new initiatives.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Many good things are happening and will happen as a result of local partnerships, and we welcome the support and endorsement which the right hon. Gentleman gives them.

I was astonished by the omission from the statement of any new training initiative. The vast majority of our problems flow from the simple basic fact that, at present, more than 20 per cent of the men in our communities are out of work and another 20 per cent. are economically inactive—that is more than 40 per cent.—despite the five-year initiative of Lord Walker. Those are the facts of life in our communities. Like his predecessor, will the right hon. Gentleman at least announce a jobs target for this programme so that we can judge it by that success or failure?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is a senior member of the Labour party, and I hoped that he would take the opportunity to condemn tomorrow's industrial action. It

is a matter of great regret, and is putting many jobs at risk. It is appalling that Labour Members will not condemn the action.

I have mentioned training on several occasions, because I believe that resources for training are vital to ensure that the quality of life in the whole of the valleys area improves.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): In the face of the characteristically ungracious response of Labour Members to this welcome announcement today, can my right hon. Friend confirm that it is no exaggeration to say that the programme for the valleys has been one of the most successful initiatives ever taken by the Government in any region of the country? Will he join me in paying tribute to Lord Walker—my right hon. Friend's predecessor in the Welsh Office, and my predecessor in Worcester—for his energy, drive, vision and concern for the people of the valleys, which led him to set up the initiative in the first place?

Mr. Hunt: I join my hon. Friend in warmly paying tribute to his predecessor, Lord Walker. We are now discussing an extension to a programme which was opposed at the outset by the Labour party but which is now recognised as one of the most innovative and imaginative programmes ever devised.

Other parts of Britain and Europe certainly agree with what we are saying. There has been an enormous amount of interest from elsewhere in Europe and the Community as well as other parts of central and eastern Europe in what has been achieved in Wales. For example, the Welsh Office has recently been invited to offer advice on the redevelopment of the Frankfurt an der Oder region of the former east Germany. That is an outstanding example of the way in which Wales is seen as the place from which it can be learned how to regenerate an economy and attract investment.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State will know that, with increasing mobility, there is a real interlinking of economic interests and employment between the valley communities and those communities which are immediately contiguous to the valleys. Will he give the House an undertaking that, in the review of assisted area status, those areas which are contiguous to the valleys, such as Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot, will not be downgraded?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are presently conducting a review of assisted areas. I am joined in that study by the President of the Board of Trade, and we shall be announcing our decisions as soon as possible. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was in the House for the whole of my statement.

Mr. Anderson Yes, I was.

Mr. Hunt: He was. I remind the hon. Gentleman, whom I greatly respect, that I was focusing on the need not only to consider the whole infrastructure but to target jobs within the valleys themselves by means of the concept of industrial and urban villages, and so on. Let us ensure that we do not simply become dormitory areas for other centres of population. Let us ensure that we strengthen our local communities in the best possible way.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that the Welsh Development Agency has done some good work over the years in sustaining employment in the valleys, and has a vital role to play in this programme. Can he give some indication of the future funding of the agency? It is selling off property at an alarming rate, which can be sustained for only one or two years at the rate of £80 million a year. Its grant in aid has been cut from £93 million last year to under £60 million this year. What will happen after that? Is it the plan that the agency will have to apply for European money? If that is the case, is not that money earmarked for local authorities and meant to be additional to existing moneys?

Mr. Skinner: He is the Wizard of Oz.

Mr. Williams: Can the Secretary of State tell us something about the funding of the Welsh Development Agency for 1995-96 in this programme?

Mr. Hunt: I heard the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) call me the Wizard of Oz. I would simply say that he is the tin man.

I thank the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) for his tribute to the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Skinner: There is a scarecrow behind you.

Mr. Hunt: I do not want to carry this forward any further. I thank the hon. Member for Carmarthen for his tribute to the Welsh Development Agency, which was in stark contrast to the words of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy).

In 1993-94, there will be an increase in resources for the agency's urban development programme of 30 per cent. to £13 million in the valleys next year, compared with about £10 million this year. The agency will also be spending nearly £10 million on property development in the valleys. Major joint ventures are under way, for example, in Merthyr Tydfil, Tredegar and the Amman and Gwendraeth valleys.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I congratulate the Secretary of State on undertaking and carrying through one of the most successful initiatives ever launched. What lessons does he think can be drawn from the valleys for the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe?

Mr. Hunt: I welcome what my hon. Friend says. The greatest lesson that we can learn from the programme for the valleys is the way in which all partners—there are many key partners including the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency, local authorities, local voluntary organisations, training and enterprise councils, health authorities, all the other agencies and the people—have decided to come together to make the programme successful. That partnership is a demonstration to other parts of the United Kingdom and Europe which highlights what we have been able to achieve in the valleys in Wales.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I welcome the Secretary of State's determination to ensure that valley villages are not relegated to dormitory areas, and his promotion of the idea of industrial villages, which was first developed at the Neath valley conference last year. I point out that he has not repeated any target for jobs of the sort which his predecessor set of 25,000 to 30,000 new jobs over the past five years—a target which was not achieved. There is a certain shiftiness about the claim that unemployment has fallen because what has happened is that full-time,

[Mr. Peter Hain]

relatively well paid jobs have been replaced by part-time, badly paid jobs, and adult male unemployment has increased by more than 11 per cent.

The Secretary of State has announced a cut in funding over the next five years in real terms: £1 billion in real terms over the next five years is less than £800 million which was the cost of the past five years. Is he not indulging in a certain sleight of hand and public relations gimmickry?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Member is not comparing like with like. Rather than go into great detail on the figures, let me assure him that the reason why I announced a figure of well over £1 billion is that I wanted to get away from the sterile arguments about funding and resources and get on with the job of targeting the resources in the most effective way.

As for industrial villages, I know that several Labour Members have urged me not to pay too much tribute to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), but I disregard all that advice, because his idea has been an excellent one and I am happy to embrace it. I want to build on the successful local strategies of the local authorities and the Welsh Development Agency to ensure that there is close involvement with the training and enterprise councils and others.

The key is to ensure that the full range of support is available to allow local business to grow successfully. We also need to target specific sectors of the market where there is potential—for example, by equipping local industry to supply inward investors through the Source Wales initiative, which holds tremendous prospects for all those involved in the valleys.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement today for two reasons. First, it demonstrates continuity in the Government's policy by moving from phase 1 to phase 2 of the initiative. Secondly, it supplies an excellent example of where the Government are prepared to put investment into joint ventures with the many others whom he mentioned. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it should be an encouragement to people in coalfield communities and elsewhere, and an example of what can be done?

Mr. Hunt: We have indeed demonstrated that there is life after coal. The valleys have performed extremely well over many years in supplying much-needed coal for the economy. Now, as the economy changes, the valleys have accepted the challenge of change. They have done so in a marvellous way, to a large extent in response to the extremely good initiative of my predecessor, Lord Walker. It has been an example to everyone. Some Opposition Members shout across the Chamber from time to time, but I know that in private they acknowledge that the programme for the valleys has been a remarkable success.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Secretary of State agree that his principal purpose today has been to quarry away at the adjective mine and claim the mantle of his predecessor as Wales' principal but most vacuous rant boy? Does he agree that what he has offered today over five years is a tenth of the money that his Government lost in a single day on Black Wednesday? Why does not he leave aside the discredited figures on employment and unemployment and look to every other indicator of poverty in Wales such as personal income per head, family income and low wages? He would find that, in relative and real terms, Wales had lost and is still losing. The valleys of Wales are still the capital of lowest wages and highest exploitation of our workers.

Mr. Hunt: I am increasingly disenchanted with Opposition Members talking down Wales and the valleys. If they want to be misery merchants, they may, but I do not intend to join them.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Is my right hon. Friend aware that jobs in coal mining in the European Community have fallen from 1·86 million to 260,000? Should not the valleys initiative be a model for the rest of Europe? My right hon. Friend has already said that he is advising parts of Germany, but are there not other ways in which the model could be promoted in the European Community and indeed, the United States, where jobs in coal mining are also being lost?

Mr. Hunt: I completely agree. We are seeing the decline of coal mining as an industry throughout the world. In Wales, we demonstrate that there is a way, so long as people accept the challenge of change. I believe that, in five years, people will see a programme which over 10 years has transformed the dereliction of the past into vibrant, growing communities of the future.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I inquire of the Minister who produced the flatulent statement this afternoon whether the additionality rule has been abandoned for the valleys project. If that is the case, will the additionality rule, which has been applied rigidly throughout the rest of the United Kingdom, be abandoned, for example, in Yorkshire and other coalfield areas?

Mr. Hunt: I do not know why the hon. Gentleman referred to my statement as flatulent. I suppose it is because he is an expert on the matter. I speak for the whole of the United Kingdom when I demonstrate to the European Commission that European funds are genuinely additional. They enable programmes to take place in the valleys and elsewhere in the United Kingdom which would not take place without the support of the EC.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Secretary of State recognise that his comments were insulting when he expressed surprise at the idea that Welsh communities can have vision and purpose for their own future? Does he recognise that the Welsh communities have always had vision and purpose, and that they require a Secretary of State who places confidence in them and their elected representatives in pursuing that vision and purpose?

Will the right hon. Gentleman set aside the complacency which he showed earlier when he referred to unemployment as if it was disappearing? Does he recognise the devastation that unemployment causes to communities throughout Wales? Hope has been stolen from a whole generation of young people by the threat of unemployment. Will he tell us a simple target that he has set for providing training opportunities and real jobs for young people in those communities?

Mr. Hunt: Again, I am pretty depressed when I hear Opposition Members talk the area down and talk about "a

whole generation" losing hope. I hope that he recognises that, since 1979, the Conservative Government have picked up the misery which the Labour party left by closing coal mines. We inherited a country in which slag heaps had not been removed and mining communities were dispirited because new jobs had not been provided. We breathed new life into Wales and the valleys. It is about time that Opposition Members began to recognise that.

Points of Order

5.4 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I entirely accepted your suggestion this afternoon that my tardy arrival at business questions meant that I had missed the statement and, therefore, would not be called. I accepted that without equivocation, as you know. However, it caused me concern when the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who speaks for the Liberal party, arrived halfway through the Welsh statement and was called. I hope that there is no discrimination between tinpot members of the Liberal party who reckon to be Front-Bench spokesmen and other Back Benchers. The same rules should apply to everyone.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Do you accept that the reason why I was a little late for the statement was that you took the sensible decision not to call the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), which meant that business questions lasted for considerably less time than I had anticipated?

Madam Speaker: Perhaps I might respond to the original point of order. I say seriously to the House that it is not my intention to call Members to question a statement when they have not heard that statement. I think that I have the support of the House on that, including the support of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

It is true that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) was one minute late for the statement. He was kind enough to send his Whip post haste to my Chair to explain why he was late. I will not repeat that explanation to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

NON-DOMESTIC RATING (NO. 2)

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. John Redwood and Mr. Robin Squire, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to non-domestic rating for the period beginning with 1st April 1993 and ending with 31st March 1995; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 176.]

Orders of the Day

Adjournment (Easter)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising tomorrow, do adjourn until Wednesday 14th April and, at its rising on Friday 30th April, do adjourn until Tuesday 4th May.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

5.7 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The point of an Adjournment debate is to give right hon. and hon. Members the opportunity to seek redress of grievance before the House adjourns. That is the purpose of my speech. When I made arrangements to speak in the debate I did so on the assumption that the debate would immediately follow business questions. I did not anticipate that there would be two lengthy statements. I have an engagement later this evening so, if the length of the debate is such that I cannot be present for the reply, I apologise to both the Chair and the Leader of the House. As I intend to raise personal cases, it was my wish to hear the response.

The redress of grievance is one of the principal roles of the House. Seeking redress of grievance is one of the principal roles of a Member of Parliament. My great worry is that, because ministerial responsibility is being hived away to agencies not accountable to the House, I am unable to obtain redress on several extremely serious issues that relate to my constituents. Ministers do not reply to my letters. The agencies to which they refer me do not reply to my letters. When Ministers do not reply and I table questions seeking a reply, Ministers do not answer the questions within a reasonable period. When Ministers do not reply to my letters for three months and I then write to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister does not reply to my letters, other than to acknowledge them and say that he will reply later. All of this I regard as a deliberate destruction of the proper accountability of Ministers to this House of Commons.

I want to describe the kind of issues relating to ordinary people seeking to live decent orderly lives which Ministers in this Government appear simply not to care about, because they will not respond.

For example, there is a Mrs. A—I will in no case give the full name of the person concerned, although I will supply it if necessary to the Leader of the House, together with the address—of Longsight, who made an application for mobility allowance in April 1992. Her papers were lost by the relevant agency. I have written repeatedly to the Secretary of State for Social Security about that case. I wrote to him on 14 December 1992; he did not reply to that letter. I wrote to him on 25 February 1993; he did not reply to that letter, written now more than five weeks ago. Mrs. A's mobility allowance application, which has now been unsolved for a year, remains unsettled.

Let us take the case of Mrs. J of Fallowfield in my constituency. She made a claim for disability living allowance. The Benefits Agency lost her claim. I have been in repeated correspondence with the Secretary of State for Social Security about that claim. I wrote to him on 20 January, 25 February and 26 March. He has replied to none of my letters about the claim, which has been outstanding for many months.

Let me refer to a claim by Mr. W of Levenshulme, which appeared to relate to unemployment benefit. I wrote to the Secretary of State for Employment in November of last year about this case. The Department of Employment passed it to the Department of Social Security. A junior Minister in the Department of Social Security forwarded it to an agency. We now have a situation in which I have written three times to the Secretary of State for Social Security—on 18 January, 19 February and now again. I have received no reply to any of my letters about a case which has been going on since November of last year and which is unsolved.

Then we have the case of Miss H of Levenshulme in my constituency. There again, she applied for disability living allowance last November. When the Benefits Agency received her application they sent her a notification, which they admit was sent to the wrong address. I wrote to the Secretary of State about it on 22 January, again on 25 February and again on 26 March. I have had replies from the Secretary of State to none of my letters.

Let us take the case of Mr. T of Gorton relating to his wife. She made an application for maternity payment in July of last year. A mess has been made of her application and it has still not been sorted out nine months later. I wrote to the Secretary of State on 25 January, 25 February and 26 March. The Secretary of State has replied to none of my letters.

Then there is the case of Mr. G of Gorton. In this case, there were two applications. There was an application for attendance allowance in August 1991. This was converted by the Department into an application for disability living allowance. That claim, 20 months later, is not yet settled. An application for mobility allowance was made in February 1992—14 months ago. There was a delay in passing on the claim. I wrote to the Secretary of State. I wrote to the Prime Minister on 9 March; more than three weeks later, all I have had from the Prime Minister is an acknowledgement.

Appalling mistakes have been acknowledged by the Benefits Agency with regard to this claim. It admitted, with regard to the claim for attendance allowance, that

"due to a clerical error"

a decision made in May 1992 was not notified to the person concerned until August 1992.

In the case of the second claim, for mobility allowance, the lady concerned was examined by a doctor in March 1992, but the claim was not passed on to the agency until February 1993—11 months between the two processes—and, as a result, my constituent was without remedy for that period.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is it not true that in some of the tragic cases so familiar to hon. Members—certainly I get told about exactly similar situations—there are occasions when, tragically, the individual concerned dies before the matter is resolved, causing considerable heartache to the family and not helping the person who should have been getting the assistance?

Mr. Kaufman: I agree with my hon. Friend. I do not believe that it enters into the minds of the Ministers responsible—I shall deal in a moment with cases relating to the Secretary of State for Health—that human beings are involved in this. The letter arrives on the Secretary of State's desk, if it gets that far; it is then passed on to an agency and, although I repeatedly write to the Secretary of State and describe some of the physical suffering that is being endured, the Secretary of State does not appear to be able to empathise with a fellow human being less

fortunately placed than he or she, who is suffering, often in great pain and in the most humiliating circumstances. I shall describe such a case in a moment.

Let me take the case of Mr. M of Levenshulme. He applied for disability living allowance in November 1992. His application has not yet been decided. I wrote to the Secretary of State on 8 January, 21 January and 21 February. He has replied to none of my letters. I tabled a question asking him to reply to my letters; he has not replied to the question either.

I will cite a human case which I regard as, in its way, the saddest of those that I have described. It concerns a constituent of mine, Mr. B, of Rusholme in my constituency, and I will read to the House part of his letter. He says:

"My daughter learned of the highlighted attached vacancies last weekend".

That was an advertisement by the Benefits Agency in the local press, which read:

"The Benefits Agency anticipates a number of vacancies for Administrative Assistants in its District Offices at Wythenshawe and Rusholme . . .

We intend to make sure that there is equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all".

And it said:

"Application forms can be obtained from the local job centre. Completed forms should be received no later than 26.3.93".

My constituent told me that his daughter went to the Rusholme jobcentre on 22 March—that was four days before the expiry of the period for receipt of forms—

"to obtain an application form as per the advert. She was told there were no forms left. When she asked where she could obtain one she was told she couldn't ('that's it').

When she told me this I couldn't believe it and went there myself. I was told the same thing. I telephoned the Benefits Agency and they confirmed that only a limited number of forms were printed. I do not know how they were disseminated. It seems grossly unfair for an employer to behave like this to the unemployed."

In my constituency, unemployment is 18 per cent. overall, and very much higher among young people. The letter continues:

"For them to purport to 'intend to make sure that there is equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all' as an Equal Opportunity employer is a joke. The advert is misleading, untruthful and dishonest. It is depressing enough to be unemployed without the added demoralisation of being denied the right to apply for a job in accordance with the terms of its advertisement within its closing date."

That was a letter I received this week about the conduct of a Government Department. I have written to the Secretary of State about it, but I have not yet received a reply. I shall be extremely surprised if I get a reply and utterly astounded if I get a satisfactory one.

Let me draw attention to two outstanding cases relating to health matters. My constituent, Mrs. M of Fallowfield, had a kidney transplant which failed. As a result, she has to wear—and she came to see me with this—a 14 in wide permanent back wrapped around her. That is how she lives her life. She could be helped if she were given a disconnect ambulatory peritoneal dialysis device which should be available under the national health service. However, because of Government restriction of finance, there is a waiting list and she has to wait for it.

I wrote to the Secretary of State for Health saying that I would like her to meet my constituent so that she could see how she had to live. I do not know whether the Secretary of State for Health could begin to place herself in the position of a woman who has to go around like that all her life and will continue having to do so unless the treatment is provided to her by the national health service.

Whenever I have written to the Secretary of State about this matter, she has simply passed my letters on to some agency and when the woman who is suffering in that way wrote to the Secretary of State, she never received a reply. The Secretary of State wrote to me saying that the letter had been lost. That is how the Secretary of State is earning her very large salary.

Let us take the case of Mr. H of Levenshulme who had a prostate operation that was unsuccessful. His consultant told him that it could be of benefit to him if he had a minor operation in which he would be fitted with an artificial urinary sphincter. I wrote to the consultant to find out whether such treatment would be of assistance to my constituent, and the consultant replied in a long letter explaining the situation. He wrote:

"There . . . is no physical contra-indication to such a device being used in Mr. H's case, but yet again I am afraid we find ourselves embroiled in the fiscal issues. With cost improvement programmes and other financial restrictions, together with no prosthetics budget, I simply do not have the money to be able to fund the £3,000 or so that would be necessary for this device . . . I quite understand that he has no means to be able to purchase this prosthesis and I do not really think that it is reasonable that he should be expected to do so . . . I would be extremely grateful for any help that you might be able to give me which would be beneficial to your constituent."

The consultant urologist wrote that such a device could help my constituent, that he would like to fit it, but he did not have the money for it and he asked me whether I could help get the money for it.

I have been in constant correspondence with the Secretary of State for Health since then. She simply passes my letters on to the regional health authority. The last time I wrote to her was on 11 March, which is getting on for a month ago. She has not replied to my letters. I wonder whether she can began to imagine the life that my constituent is living, in pain, discomfort and great inconvenience due to the way that she is failing to administer a satisfactory national health service. She is failing even to respond to the letters that I have sent her about my constituent.

I have chosen just a handful of letters from a file of 400 current cases. I could send the Leader of the House many more. They all relate to two aspects: first, human cases are no longer being dealt with by Ministers but are being shuffled off to agencies in buck passing and, secondly, that the agencies themselves do not and need not respond, because they are completely unaccountable to me or to the House. The Leader of the House is shaking his head. If they are accountable, why do they not reply to my letters and get something done, as my constituents have been suffering for many months?

I say again what I have said on several occasions and will continue saying. I will not relent until something is done about it. The way in which the Government are hiving off human concerns to agencies which have no obligation to reply, even to Members of Parliament, is a destruction of democracy through the destruction of accountability of Ministers to the House. That is what Ministers are for. Ministers are there not only to consider high policy such as Bosnia but to examine cases involving individual human beings. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) does not believe that, he is not fit to represent his constituents.

[Mr. Kaufman]

Every individual citizen of our democracy has a right to have his or her grievance considered by a Minister. These agencies do not respond satisfactorily; they do not deal with cases sufficiently. As I have said before, in my view, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency should be dismissed. If Ministers do not do their job properly, they should be dismissed, too.

5.27 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I usually find the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) an agreeable companion when I travel north with him—except when he talks politics, so we do not talk politics very often. He was a Minister during the last Labour Government. That was a long time ago and one has to have a good memory to remember those days. When we wrote then as Members of Parliament to him as a Minister, he could not possibly have seen every letter that was sent to him.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) should know that when I was appointed to the Department of the Environment in 1974, the first thing I said to my officials was that I wanted to see every letter and that no letter could be sent until a draft had been put before me and I had either approved or changed the letter. I replied to every Member of Parliament of whatever party who wrote to me. The hon. Gentleman, who is an agreeable companion when he is not talking rubbish, is wrong. I had that responsibility, although it was long ago, and during my five years in Government I replied on individual cases to every Member of Parliament who wrote to me.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Of course, the right hon. Gentleman used his usual charm when he said that I was talking rubbish. I maintain that it must be difficult for some Ministers, particularly those who receive an enormous amount of correspondence, to respond to every letter. I am sure that it is impossible for the Secretary of State for Health, which is an emotive issue, to read every letter she receives. The right hon. Gentleman was perhaps unfair to my right hon. Friend on that score.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I do not want to interrupt my hon. Friend's flow but I had been about to intervene in the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—not in an attempt to answer him, which would be improper, in the circumstances until I have an opportunity to speak, but because he courteously informed me that he might not be here when I speak—to place on record that I would be grateful if he would make sure that I have the identifying details of all the cases that he mentioned. I cannot comment on the cases off the cuff, but without that information I cannot get anything done about them.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I make no apology at all for raising again what I regard as the unsatisfactory hospital provision in my constituency. Those who are regular attenders of this debate will be aware that this sad saga has been going on for years and years.

In June 1980, which was a long time ago, I had an Adjournment debate on the need for a new district hospital. I was told then that a decision would be reached with all possible speed, but I heard nothing for a year. In June 1981, I went to see the then Minister and in October 1981 the scheme was accepted by the Department and the regional health authority. My constituents thought that at long last we were on our way and would have the district hospital that we had been promised for many years.

In April 1983, in a formal review of capital schemes, the regional health authority could not guarantee a place in the programme, and the previous acceptance of a start in 1987-88 was not confirmed. In October 1983 we were told that we were provisionally in the programme for the 1988 financial year and that the Treasury—this is the important thing—had approved the purchase of the site.

In September 1984 our hopes of a district hospital were dashed for ever. There was enormous anger and dismay in my constituency that something which we had been promised for so long had suddenly disappeared. But hope springs eternal, and we had fresh hope that, instead of getting a district hospital, we would at least get a community hospital in our area. This was confirmed by the regional health authority in May 1988 and a suitable site was earmarked. The community hospital was to comprise 24 beds and 24 day places for the elderly mentally infirm, 48 beds and 30 day places for the elderly, two 25 place mental illness day units, four out-patient clinic suites, two radiodiagnostic rooms, 10 investigation beds and one small pathology laboratory. Such a hospital would have filled a desperate need in my constituency because, as I am sure that most hon. Members will agree, the problem of an aging population is a very serious one.

I have no complaint against Trafford health authority because I think that it is as angry as I am. It even offered to fund 39 per cent. of the capital cost by means of disposable proceeds plus a large cash injection. I thought —and I am sure that it thought—that such a commitment would impress the regional health authority. How wrong can one get? As time has gone on, I have wondered more and more what we have to do to impress the regional health authority.

Last year our community hospital was included in a shortlist of six projects for consideration by the regional health authority, but in April 1992 we were told that our community hospital was not in the regional capital programme. What I want to know is why Trafford is given such a low priority by the regional health authority.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): It is due to my hon. Friend's representation.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: My hon. Friend could well be right. However, at the previous election my majority went up, for which I am very grateful.

Since 1980, we have been ranked bottom in the region in terms of capital investment per resident. On capital schemes since 1980, Trafford is the only district which has not had a large capital project. Again I ask why.

Mr. Kaufman: Because Trafford is under Tory control.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The right hon. Gentleman is quite right. Trafford is under Tory control. I note that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is to wind up this debate. He is my pair, and I must warn him always to say nice things about me or else I shall pair

with someone else. I also warn him that, as Chairman of the Committee of Selection, I will put him on a Committee that will sit for a long time.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The hon. Gentleman should consider the laws of supply and demand a little more carefully than he seems to be doing.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I will heed what my pair has said.

When we were unsuccessful last year, we did get a ray of hope: we were told that there was a long-standing practice of the regional health authority that schemes which were shortlisted one year, if unsuccessful, would be shortlisted and approved the year after. So yet another bid was made. No one can claim that Trafford health authority is not persistent. On 9 March of this year, a presentation was made to members of the regional health authority. We were told that we were on a shortlist of four. On 22 March, the regional health authority papers were received, which recommended that all four schemes should proceed. On 23 March, the regional health authority, without a vote, approved the other three schemes and rejected the south Trafford community hospital. That decision has caused great anger in my constituency.

I am told that there is to be a site visit by regional health authority officers later this month. I urge my right hon. Friend to pass on my views to the Secretary of State for Health and to ask her to do some plain talking to the regional health authority. I want the scheme to be given a firm commitment, and I shall raise the issue at every opportunity until I succeed. I am asking not for preferential treatment, but for a fair deal for the people of my constituency.

I wish to deal next with the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and the need to amend it. The legislation was brought in with the best of intentions, but it is seriously flawed. I get depressed when I see magistrates who have served for years and been of great public service resigning because they feel that they cannot cope with the job that they have to do.

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention particularly to juvenile offenders and to the front page of today's edition of the *Daily Mail*, which makes harrowing reading. It reports the case of a 14-year-old boy, branded an outlaw by a judge, who had his friends laughing and cheering when he was once more placed under the supervision of a council which has admitted that it cannot contain him. Before yesterday's appearance, he had been convicted 42 times in two years. It is worth noting that the magistrate is quoted as saying:

"We feel very strongly, as does the public, that these offences warrant a custodial sentence . . . However, our hands are tied"

under the new Act. The Northumbria police federation spokesman said:

"Our officers are very, very frustrated and annoyed that the Criminal Justice Act means nothing can be done with persistent offenders of this age.

It is a complete waste of time. We have arrested this boy more times than we care to count. Sometimes he's back on the streets quicker than the officers who arrested him".

Action is desperately needed in cases of that kind.

The seriousness of the situation has been brought home to me recently. In my constituency we have the Beechmount children's home, which is now regarded as unsuitable because it does not comply with the conditions imposed under the Children Act 1989. The council is therefore planning two new eight-bedded children's homes as a replacement. It has been decided that one of the homes will be located in my constituency.

The site was chosen in June 1992, and that is when the council should have consulted local residents to make clear to them what was happening and to listen to their views, but it was only recently, when the planning application came up, that the storm broke in the area. There have been massive protests from residents and a packed public meeting was addressed by the chairman of the social services committee and officers from the social services department. At the end of it all, there was a feeling among local residents that their views had not been listened to and that the council had made up its mind. It is the not-in-my-backyard syndrome, where everyone says, "Yes, we must have such places", but nobody wants them in their district. The residents in that area feel genuine anger at the lack of consultation and believe that their views have been disregarded. There is great anxiety that juvenile delinquents on remand could be placed in that institution. It is imperative that people should know exactly what changes in the Criminal Justice Act are envisaged and what is to be done to ensure that dangerous and persistent young offenders are placed in secure accommodation.

Both the issues that I have raised today are of great importance to my constituents. Before the House rises for the Easter recess, I should like an assurance that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will raise my strong concerns with the Ministers responsible.

5.41 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I wish to raise an issue of urgent importance. It is the time of year when university students are entering the final part of their degree courses and are thinking of making the transition from obtaining academic qualifications to obtaining professional qualifications. It is crucial for the Government to address the discrimination that occurs when young people try to qualify as practising lawyers, either barristers or solicitors.

If we want a profession and judiciary that reflect the society in which we live and in which the judiciary sits in judgment, we must guarantee that there are no unjust hurdles or obstacles for anyone with ability and determination to qualify for those professions. Sadly, financial pressures on local education authorities—which, for many of them, includes capping—result in discrimination against potential trainee lawyers on the grounds of their social status, which often coincides with discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin.

That discrimination and the barriers against entry to the profession have increased disturbingly in recent years. For someone from a working-class or poorer family, the chances of entering university are always diminished—any statistics on entry to further education demonstrate that. But the chances of qualifying as a barrister or solicitor are much smaller for those who are not affluent, who have many more hurdles to jump.

One reason for the problem is that in order to become a practising solicitor it is usual—if not absolutely necessary—to obtain a university degree, not exclusively in law. Mandatory grants from the local authority are available for that degree. Having obtained that university degree, a prospective solicitor needs to complete a one-year course to gain a final professional qualification.

[Mr. John Fraser]

It is only then that the prospective lawyer can begin the two years of practical training. The grant for the tuition for the professional examination to become a lawyer is discretionary, not mandatory. A trainee lawyer cannot receive a mandatory grant for that professional examination, without which a lawyer's training is incomplete. Without that final qualification, the degree for which students are about to sit their finals is as useless as a car with one wheel missing. The matter is urgent; students need an announcement now as they need to be able to plan their transition and complete their professional qualifications.

The pressure on local education authorities, including the pressure of capping, is enormous. It means that in the poorest parts of Britain discretionary grants have virtually run out. I am making a specific case for the profession as I want to keep my speech relatively narrow, but the case has a wider application. Discretionary grants have run out throughout much of the country. There is a clear financial discrimination against people who want to enter the law. The Government should make mandatory grants—subject to capital and income tests—available for the final part of the professional examinations.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I agree that there is an enormous problem, which the hon. Gentleman is right to highlight. Has he considered whether the Bar Council, the Law Society or the profession generally could make such provision? Ultimately, law chambers, professional firms and the profession generally will benefit from students gaining such qualifications. I am not sure whether it is possible for local education authorities to bear that burden now and perhaps we should look elsewhere.

Mr. Fraser: I shall come to that issue, but I want to be fairly brief.

The matter is urgent as, with the recession, many firms, including big city solicitors and those normally deemed to be affluent, are not investing money in training schemes. In fact, they are often making redundancy payments to lawyers as a consequence of the recession. There is a case for a training board for solicitors. There are training boards in many other professions, trades and skills. However, the Government are winding up training boards, rather than establishing them.

A distinction can be made between the legal profession and some other professions. If someone wants to become an architect, he or she can, I understand, receive a mandatory grant to cover all the necessary academic training needed to qualify as an architect. That is certainly true in the teaching profession, where students receive grants for gaining the degree of Bachelor of Education. They may then begin their vocational training without the interregnum period of one year when they have to manage on their own if they cannot receive a discretionary grant from their local authority.

I am not saying that there is malicious discrimination, but there is discrimination on the grounds of people's social or ethnic status which affects those with working-class backgrounds. I made inquiries of a number of London boroughs, many of which had large black populations and were some of the poorest boroughs, not just in London, but throughout the country.

Ealing, a large and relatively poor borough, receives no discretionary grants. One third of Ealing's population comes from non-white, ethnic groups. Hackney, one of the poorest boroughs in the country, receives no discretionary grants and one third of its population comes from minority ethnic groups. Haringey, which has similar statistics for the composition of its population, receives no discretionary grants. Harrow, admittedly a Conservative borough, but one which has a relatively high ethnic population, receives no discretionary grants. In my borough of Lambeth, which is poor—either the second or the fourth most deprived in the country—three out of 10 people come from non-white ethnic groups, there is a high concentration of working-class and unemployed people and it receives no discretionary grants.

In Newham, four out of every 10 of the population come from ethnic minority groups and the borough is relatively poor. It receives no discretionary grants. The same is true of Tower Hamlets, which is a relatively poor borough. Only one borough among such a group receives any discretionary grants: the London borough of Brent. However, I am told that even in that borough the grants are limited in scope and may be abolished.

Other statistics provided by the College of Law show that in 1989-90, 64 per cent. of students who had received their degrees and were going on to obtain their final professional qualifications received local authority discretionary grants. In the year 1992-93, only 24 per cent. of the students going to the College of Law will do so with a grant from their local authority. Other surveys carried out by the College of Law highlight a serious problem. They show that 58 per cent. of a sample of almost 100 law students who had been offered places at professional training schools—which are like gold dust—had to turn them down. Some 58 per cent. of those who turned down their places had to do so for financial reasons because in most cases they could not get a discretionary grant from their local authority.

An even worse scandal is illustrated by the case of one of my constituents, a working-class woman who was refused a discretionary grant. She used her own money to study for her first degree at university and did not receive a single penny of the mandatory grant. She then funded herself to take and pass the common professional examination—because she did not have a law degree—but on the final lap of the course to qualify as a solicitor, she was refused a discretionary grant because there was no money in the kitty. That is an appalling state of affairs.

The combination of the discretionary grant system for professional examinations for trainee lawyers and the financial pressure on local authorities results in discrimination against working-class students. It is no good mincing words—they are poorer people.

Furthermore, there is discrimination against minorities —as my figures from London boroughs show. There is discrimination against married women who may have degrees, who have started a family and then want to get professional qualifications later in life, but cannot get any kind of grant. The worst kind of discrimination occurs against those who paid for their own degree courses and still cannot get a grant for the last year of their professional qualifications.

The dramatic collapse in public funding for those wanting to go into the legal profession inevitably narrows the base of the profession and guarantees the continued narrow social base of the judiciary and has further effects.

I am not criticising individual members of the judiciary because I have a good deal of admiration for people such as the Lord Chief Justice and Lord Justice Woolf. Figures show that the judiciary—especially the senior judiciary—is dominated by people who went either to Oxford or Cambridge, who came from affluent backgrounds, who on the whole are male, white and from upper-class backgrounds. I do not mean all the judiciary and I stress that I am not criticising individuals, but the narrowing of the profession means a narrowing of the base from which the judiciary is drawn.

It may be possible to have sponsorship—the firm of which I am a member provides some sponsorship—but the recession has reduced that possibility. That is why the matter is more urgent than ever before. The recession has reduced the amount of available sponsorship so that those practices dealing with legal aid—the sort of high street practice which a working-class person would be able to get into more often, but not exclusively—are the least equipped to afford to take on trainee solicitors, or articled clerks as they used to be called. That was how I started. It is not malicious but real discrimination against people on the grounds of their social status before they study for articles.

To illustrate how such discrimination can be compounded, the Society of Labour Lawyers conducted a survey recently and found that black law students were rejected five times more often than white students when applying to law practices. That is a considerable hurdle to leap before entering the profession.

I appreciate that the profession is concerned about equal opportunities. The Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 was introduced exactly for that purpose. If we want a classless society and a classless nation, we must have a classless judiciary and a classless legal profession—including stipendiary magistrates, county court judges, recorders and even the highest judges in the land—from which that is drawn. A dramatic collapse in the discretionary grants system and the number of less affluent people able to enter the profession means that in 10 or 15 years' time the judiciary will not reflect the society in which we live.

If the Government were to announce that grants to enter the profession for that single year were not discretionary but mandatory, the problem would be solved. "Mandatory" is the right word because the House has a duty to ensure that we create a classless society in which the professions and the judiciary are not dominated by a single segment of the population.

5.54 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I hope that the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) will forgive me if I do not follow the road that he has just travelled, which is obviously one of which he has great knowledge and expertise. I also hope that he will realise that I offer him no discourtesy when I say that I am a little disappointed that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) was not called before him. If that had happened, it would have given me the chance to thank the hon. Member for Tooting for his kind words after my maiden speech some 14 years ago. I am still awaiting an opportunity to do so. If he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and follows me, he may wish to reiterate those remarks of many years ago.

Before we rise for the Easter recess, I wish to draw the attention of the House to two matters that have become topical within the past 24 hours. The first is raves, which was the subject of a statement from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in answer to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminister, North (Sir J. Wheeler). The second is illegal camping by gipsies, which was the subject of a statement by my right and learned hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Regrettably, my constituency and others have, over the past few months, suffered from the new rave parties, which have meant many thousands of youngsters gathering together in various locations, frequently illegally and usually on a Saturday evening, to enjoy musical entertainment. That sounds completely innocent, but more often than not they take place in buildings that are unsuitable and unsafe for such gatherings. It is also regrettable that—admittedly allegedly—they are a haven for drug pushers and dealers, to the detriment of the young people involved.

We in the Luton area have had our fair share of problems, although the police, with the co-operation of the local councils in Bedfordshire, have taken out a High Court injunction, obviously at an expense to the local charge payers, to prevent such gatherings. Our police regularly gather together on a Friday or even a Saturday evening to try to prevent such activities, which are so well advertised in various ways to those intending to participate that we have had to ask local forces to be on standby so that police can stop a rave before it takes place, or go in and break it up.

That is why I particularly welcome the statement from my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that the Government have recognised that that is a problem and will give the police new powers so that they can stop any vehicle driven by someone intending to go to a rave within five miles of the place where it is to be held. They will also try to discourage the organisers of the events.

Only recently—the case was mentioned in the national news—there was a large gathering outside Luton police station on the Sunday morning. Admittedly it consisted mainly of what I hope were peace-loving people, but attacks were made on the police station because the police had enforced the law and tried to break up those events.

I and my constituents are concerned that hard-earned council tax payers' money is having to be diverted to discourage and prevent such events. Local authorities, faced with the financial burden that they impose, and possibly the moral burden because of parental objections, have tried to offer alternative sites for legal raves, but have been turned down.

Hon. Members know that no entry fee is charged for these events, partly because they take place in other people's property, so there is no hire fee. Buildings are often broken into for the purpose. One wonders where the finances come from to keep such activities going. Their organisation must cost some money.

The biggest concern that has been expressed to me by my constituents relates to drug taking at these events. There are those who support organisers, such as Exodus in my constituency. I received a letter recently from a parent of two teenage children which says:

"Whilst I am aware that drugs are a problem associated with the rave scene, I know the Exodus group are doing their best to prevent and educate young people about drug taking.

[Mr. John Carlisle]

Any club or gathering of young people will have drugs present and drug-taking going on, it is part of the youth scene and will always be. Is it not better to educate young people about drugs and their dangers than try to ban events where it is suspected drugs will be present?"

That may be a minority view among parents, but it is one with which we must contend. That letter would seemingly come from a responsible parent seeking my assistance, and there are others with such an attitude. The House must understand that raves are dangerous, and worrying for parents who have little idea where their children are going when they set off in their various groups, over which they have little control.

Organisers of such events have illegally squatted in various properties in and around the Luton area. Only recently, it was brought to my attention that a property purchased by the Department of Transport as a result of the proposed widening of the M1 had been illegally occupied by organisers from the Exodus group. However, they have since taken out a tenancy. A redundant old people's home that is awaiting planning permission is also illegally occupied by rave organisers.

If those organisers are genuine in their intent to offer entertainment to young people and not to allow the passage and sale of drugs, surely they should not resort to such illegal activities. On Saturday morning, at my advice bureau, I shall be discussing the problem with a small delegation accompanied by a local Labour councillor. I am pleased that, as a result of the Government's statement in the past 24 hours, I shall be able to tell them that, if such organisers do act illegally, they will be sat on by Her Majesty's Government.

My only regret is that legislation is to be delayed because, as the Home Secretary said, there is no room in the parliamentary timetable to bring it forward. That will be a great disappointment to my constituents, police forces, local borough councillors and everyone else involved—not least the people of Wales and the south-west who suffered last summer from illegal encampments on their land. That may have been a slightly different type of activity, but it rightly gave rise to similar Government outrage as a result of representations by hon. Members. However, because of the apparent tightness of parliamentary time, we cannot consider the matter, presumably until the new Session.

In this debate, we seek to raise matters that we believe should be dealt with before the House rises for the Easter recess, but despite the extreme powers wielded by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House in this place, he will be unable to promise me that. However, I hope that he will speak to the Home Secretary and emphasise that we could run into further trouble in the summer and that, having proposed legislation, the Government will not be thanked if it cannot be put on to the statute book.

The other half of what I wish to say is an attendant subject that has been aired frequently on the Floor of the House and was mentioned in Prime Minister's Question Time this afternoon. I make no apology for raising again the subject of illegal camping by so-called gipsies. Again, I welcome the statement made only yesterday by the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), that, having received a consultation paper some months ago, along with many responses to it, the Government were seriously considering legislation on the illegal occupation of public and private land by so-called gipsies.

It should be said immediately that there is a difficulty of definition, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) identified when he introduced a Bill on the subject on 5 February—the distinction between the old, rather romantic Romany gipsy who has been with us for many centuries and has a part in Britain's life and culture, about which no one would argue, particularly in East Anglia where I live, and the new age travellers, as they are called—the tinkers or whatever—who are the scourge of so many people's lives and who have probably created an urgent need for the House to consider appropriate legislation to deal with the problem.

The problem has accelerated since the original Caravan Sites Act 1968. Lord Lubbock and Mr. Norman Dodds, then the hon. Member for Dartford, introduced legislation intended to cope with some 3,500 gipsies. We are now faced with some 13,500 people—if one can count them —who purport to be gipsies, but who in no sense are part of the original number.

It is the behaviour of the travellers which has caused so much trouble and distress to our constituents. They illegally occupy land, often breaking through padlocks on farm land, parking on lay-bys or attendant ground near roads, harassing farmers, going close to residential areas and sometimes moving on to building sites which are often owned by distant landlords or public authorities.

Only recently, in the Leagrave area of Luton, we had a problem with travellers squatting on a piece of land owned by British Rail. The Government have given increased powers to the police and the courts to move such people on more quickly than used to be the case, but it still takes time to move illegal occupants.

The second aspect is the the fact that, almost without exception, such people behave badly. Many of my hon. Friends will have had experience of constituents complaining about the bad behaviour of travellers. There is verbal abuse, not just from adults but from the children as well, physical abuse if people try to reason with them or ask them to reduce their activities, and the damage that they inflict on property in the countryside, in towns, on building sites or wherever. Such behaviour is the inevitable consequence of illegal occupation by a group of travellers. In addition, they often perform illegal activities—some admittedly alleged and hearsay—in and around the areas where they choose to squat.

Not long ago, near my own home, a local shopkeeper was harassed by a group of travellers pilfering and stealing certain items, and the poor man and his wife and family were totally unable to stop that intrusion. Most constituents could give witness to the fact that shoplifting occurs, that the menace of burglary is always present and that burglaries occur.

The last act of bad behaviour of travellers is the mess they leave. Apart from the obvious danger to human and animal health, an enormous amount of rubbish is left for someone else to clear up—either the landowner, at his own expense, or the local council. I pay credit to my own local authority of Mid-Bedfordshire for clearing up such sites. That is done at a cost to the council tax payer, with no contribution by those who used the site.

Remedies to remove such people must be found much more quickly, so I welcome the announcement by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment

that the police will have powers to move on such travellers, and that caravan sites owned and run by gipsies themselves will be developed.

I had hoped that legislation would reach the statute book sooner rather than later, and I am disappointed that it will be later. When it does, I trust that local authorities will talk to responsible gipsy organisations, which one hopes will purchase and run sites, because they are fed up with being tarred with the brush of the travellers—as other are tired of the nuisance caused by travellers who do nothing more than opt out of society and every form of responsibility.

Only recently, a site was proposed in my constituency, near the villages of Westoning and Harlington. For reasons that I have described, the villagers objected to that proposal, rightly, to their Member of Parliament. I received shoals of letters and many personal representations. There were a couple of public meetings, and both local parish councils opposed the site. The most forcible objections came from the local McIntyre home for the handicapped, which was desperately worried that people of the kind likely to occupy such a site would cause difficulties for the home's residents.

I made my objections known to the county council in a fairly forcible manner—so forcible that I was stamped upon by the Commission for Racial Equality for my remark that such persons had no place in my constituency, which the commission deemed to be racist, and which therefore made me liable to prosecution.

In the debate on 5 February, my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) related a similar problem when he objected on behalf of his constituents to the illegal occupation of land. The CRE immediately prosecuted him. In my case, a court order was entered against me. It is disgraceful that Members of Parliament, who express sometimes personal opinions but mainly opinions put by their constituents, should be abused by an organisation such as the Commission for Racial Equality in an attempt to prevent them from voicing objections that are made to them.

Apparently the CRE has the power to attempt to curb views expressed by Members of Parliament. I concur in that regard with my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford. In my own case, when the CRE decided not to prosecute me for the remarks that I had made on behalf of my constituents, the Crown prosecution service, not wanting to miss out on the act, jumped in and stated that it intended to prosecute me. There followed lengthy police interviews with me and various objectors, as well as with witnesses from the local television and radio stations and newspapers, which continued for some 12 months. At the end of the day, the Crown prosecution service decided that I should not be prosecuted.

I strongly object to an attempt, even by that organisation, to curb the remarks of a Member of Parliament made without the privilege attached to comments made on the Floor of the House. That incident personally cost me a considerable amount of money in solicitors' fees. I am not particularly bothered about that —I am more worried about representations. However, it is wrong that Members of Parliament who want to voice objections should be complained against by such organisations.

I am delighted that the Government have introduced two relevant measures, but in the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has with his colleagues in the Home Office and in the Department of the Environment, I hope that he will make it clear that, although both measures are admirable, time must be found to debate them and to put them on the statute book at the earliest opportunity.

The scourge I have described is, regrettably, growing. Some constituents are suffering the consequences daily. If raves continue as they are, young people will be in danger. Residents also are in danger, and their homes and lives are ruined by the presence of such people. I urge the Government, having taken the initiative, to take up the cudgels sooner rather than later.

6.16 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). We have both been Members of Parliament for some time and, although we may not have much in common on many political issues, the great strength of the House is that right hon. and hon. Members respect one another and regard each other as not only parliamentary colleagues but friends. I listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's views on the two subjects that he raised. Thankfully, my constituents do not suffer from either problem, but I know that many right hon. and hon. Members, irrespective of party, have constituents who do.

Although the kind of parties to which the hon. Gentleman referred are not common in my constituency, my constituents suffer from the continuous playing of loud music, hour after hour. People are driven to total distraction. The police say, "What can we do? We cannot keep going there." I share the hon. Gentleman's welcome for any power that the police or any other authority can be given by the Government to bring some justice to constituents who suffer continuous playing of loud music. As the lighter evenings approach in the spring and summer, by golly, they will suffer yet again. The hon. Member for Luton, North has done the House a service in raising those two issues.

In the Christmas Consolidated Fund debate, I addressed the House on Kashmir, and I return to that subject today. It is an issue which concerns Parliament, because many right hon. and hon. Members, irrespective of party, have constituents with a deep interest in the affairs of Kashmir. The sad and tragic well-documented events of the past are still occurring, despite the worries and protests of individuals and organisations that are deeply concerned about the role and behaviour of the Indian security forces in occupied Kashmir.

Important changes have taken place. For instance, the all-party parliamentary Kashmiri group met the Foreign Secretary in the House on 18 January. The meeting was extremely well attended: it was attended both by Labour and Conservative Members, and by Liberal Democrats. I have already paid a warm tribute personally to the Foreign Secretary, who spent well over an hour at the meeting and listened to the comments of virtually every hon. Member who attended it. Having done so, he said—among many other things—that he was deeply concerned by the lack of action to protect the human rights of people in the occupied area of Kashmir, from the very young to the very elderly. He also agreed with the group that an all-party parliamentary delegation should be allowed to visit the area.

[Mr. Tom Cox]

Both the Foreign Secretary and members of the group made many other comments during the meeting. The right hon. Gentleman said that he was there to hear Members' views because he, in turn, would brief the Prime Minister before his official visit to India a few days later: that, indeed, had been the purpose of the meeting itself.

I have tabled a number of questions to the Prime Minister about his visit. I tabled one on 22 January; the Prime Minister replied:

"I expect my discussions with the Indian Prime Minister to include the situation in Kashmir and our concerns about human rights."—[*Official Report*, 22 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. *527*.]

We must assume that such discussions took place, but many of us find it regrettable that we have learnt little about them, except from press reports. The Prime Minister has made no statement to the House, and he clearly will not do so now.

On 17 February, I asked the Prime Minister how he intended to monitor the commitment of the Prime Minister of India to respect human rights in Kashmir. He replied that he would reply to me shortly. I am still waiting for that reply; I assume that it will come eventually.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan visited London this week, and met our Prime Minister. We must assume that they discussed the issue of Kashmir, but the House has had no opportunity to ask the Prime Minister about those discussions. Many hon. Members, irrespective of party, are deeply concerned: the Kashmiri issue is fundamentally important to the House. It was a British Parliament which, 40-odd years ago, made a clear commitment to the people of Kashmir that they would be allowed to choose their future. Sadly, they have not had that opportunity.

We know of the abuses of human rights that have been perpetrated by the Indian occupying forces. Those abuses continue. I have details of a serious incident that took place on 6 January in Sapore, which is part of the occupied area. The reports clearly state that, tragically, people were killed, and that homes, shops and businesses were deliberately burned out by the Indian security forces. Again, the House has had little or no opportunity to ask what representations the British Government are making to the Indian Government. What we do know is that, despite the Foreign Secretary's stated belief that an all-party delegation should go to Kashmir, no progress has been made in that regard.

If the Indian Government have nothing to hide, why do they repeatedly refuse to allow such visits? Many highly respected Members of Parliament from all parties, some of whom have been here for many years, belong to the Kashmiri group. They will continue to press the Indian authorities to allow an all-party delegation to go and see exactly what is happening in the part of Kashmir that is controlled by the Indian Government and their security forces.

The Indian Government are now accusing Pakistan of terrorist offences. I assume that many other hon. Members will have been sent the documents containing those allegations, which have circulated in the House for the past week or so. This week, I took up the allegations with the Pakistani high commission in London. The commission said that the Pakistani Government did not intend to enter into such a dialogue or to attack other countries as they were being attacked. The high commission made it clear that it would welcome the United Nations, parliamentarians and independent groups, and that they could meet whomever they wished to meet to follow up the Indian Government's allegations.

Many hon. Members see that as yet another attempt by the Indian Government to distract attention from what deeply concerns the House, and is often raised here—the fundamental human right of men and women to decide their future, and the on-going abuses whose tragic occurrence was acknowledged by the Foreign Secretary. Until the Indian Government stop those abuses and allow Members of Parliament—or, indeed, other organisations—to see exactly what is happening, hon. Members will continue to put pressure on them. This is not a party issue: many Conservative Members are as committed as I am to the rights of the people of Kashmir, and I pay tribute to them.

I have referred to the events of 40-odd years ago. It is important to read speeches that were made a long time ago—speeches that have been forgotten by many people. It is interesting to read the comments of the last Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, and the commitments that he gave to the people of Kashmir over 40 years ago. To those commitments we can add the resolutions on Kashmir that successive British Governments have supported.

On 8 January of this year, I received a letter from the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd). Before referring to that letter, may I thank the Leader of the House sincerely for having replied to the last debate on the Adjournment motion on this subject? He said then that he was not in a position to answer the points that I had raised, but that he would take them up. To his credit, not only did he take them up but I received a substantial reply from the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I thanked him for what he said in that letter. I shall refer to a few of his comments, for it is important that they should be on the record.

In his letter the Under-Secretary of State said:

"The continuing violence"—

he was referring to the violence in Kashmir—

"is a reminder that the position of Kashmir cannot be allowed to fester indefinitely . . . We have also emphasised to the Indian Government the importance of a genuine political process within Kashmir in which the aspirations of the population can be accommodated."

The Under-Secretary's final point—the previous two are important, but this one is the reason why hon. Members are so concerned about events in Kashmir—was:

"We have also impressed on the Indian Government our concerns about human rights abuses by the Indian security forces in Kashmir and the need to improve the situation there. There can be no doubt that serious abuses have taken place".

I pay tribute to the Under-Secretary's openness and

Against those comments and the background of the continuing abuse of Kashmir as a country and, more importantly, the continuing abuse of the human rights of the people of Kashmir, I have to ask when we, as a country, and the Government intend to take much more decisive action on this issue. The three countries that are most directly involved are Pakistan, India and the United Kingdom. All three countries are members of the Commonwealth. It is not as though we are involved with countries with which we have no links, or of which we have no understanding. We have known, and have had associations with, those countries for many years. Therefore, we have a very special relationship with them.

At the meeting on 18 January, the Foreign Secretary said that the Kashmiri issue would not go away and that the status quo was unacceptable. How right he was. Many hon. Members, of all parties, will use the rights that they have, as Members of Parliament, to safeguard the interests of our constituents who have close links with Kashmir. They will also try to stop the appalling abuses that continue to be inflicted on the people of Kashmir by the Indian security forces that now occupy a country in which they are not wanted, in which they should not be and where they would not be if the people of Kashmir were given the opportunity to decide what their future should be.

6.24 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): It is a pleasure, as always, to follow the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). He does the House a considerable service by raising this issue. These occasions often lead to debates which are more interesting than those that we have on other issues during the rest of the parliamentary year and on which we spend far more time. I very much agree with what the hon. Gentleman said.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House also to accept the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and to convey them to his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I strongly support, too, what was said by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) about the financing of legal education. Although his speech was delivered in his own distinctive and idiosyncratic style, which does not necessarily command the widest possible support in the House, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made a valuable point, which is all too often overlooked by my right hon. Friends—that many of us have experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining satisfactory and quick responses from the agencies to which the right hon. Member for Gorton referred. The style of the right hon. Gentleman's speech will not necessarily command the widest possible support, but its underlying theme is more widely supported by hon. Members in all parties than my right hon. Friends may care to suppose or imagine.

There is one recommendation in the Jopling report which I hope my right hon. Friend will have no difficulty in rejecting. I know that he wishes to make progress, that he must secure wide agreement in order to make progress and that that agreement may not be so easily forthcoming now as it might have been a year ago. I refer to the recommendation that these debates should be abandoned. I hope that my right hon. Friend will reject it. These debates always lead to interesting and wide-ranging discussions. I have participated in them on many occasions, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), who I see is in his usual place. Both he and I feel nostalgic, since we shall not hear our former colleague, Sir John Stokes, speak on this occasion. He used to make distinguished contributions on the state of the nation on all occasions when these debates were held. Their echo is much missed.

I intend to return to the issue that I raised in the Christmas Adjournment motion debate—the situation in Yugoslavia, which dominated our discussions. Today that has not been the case. Nevertheless, I wish to renew the plea that I made then for further progress towards the establishment of international criminal tribunals and an international criminal court so that the criminal justice deficiencies in Yugoslavia and in the world in general can be overcome. The establishment of such bodies would lead to more effective responses and remedies than is currently the case. This matter was raised at Prime Minister's Question Time, and I very much welcome the reply that the Prime Minister was able to give to the question of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), which I thought missed the point.

In response to the Christmas Adjournment motion debate, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that he would draw my remarks to the attention of the Foreign Office, since there was no reasonable basis upon which I could expect him to reply in detail to what I had said. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend fulfilled his undertaking, but since then I have not heard a word from the Foreign Office. All too often, unfortunately, that is par for the course. What is not so often par for the course is that, having written in considerable detail to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22 January, I have received no reply from him. That is wholly exceptional, and I hope that it will not become a pathfinder development in terms of the way in which No. 10 operates. Nevertheless, I welcome what our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had to say about this issue at Question Time.

Great Britain can be very proud of the way it has approached these very distressing matters in recent months. Much of the evidence about the commission of crimes and war crimes in the former Yugoslavia arises from British initiatives undertaken when this country occupied the chair of the Council of Ministers, from our work through the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and, of course, from the commissioning of the reports of Sir John Thomson and Dame Anne Warburton. Dame Anne, who was just setting off to Yugoslavia when I raised this matter in the Christmas Adjournment motion debate, produced a report suggesting that about 20,000 crimes of rape may have been committed in the former Yugoslavia. Of course, she was accompanied on that occasion by Mrs. Simone Weil, who has just this week rejoined the French Government. A problem arises straight away. Unfortunately, there are not appended to Dame Anne Warburton's report, which consists of five pages, any witness statements or other evidence of the sort that would be admissible in a criminal court.

Fortunately, the United Nations Security Council, in resolution 780 of last autumn, established a commission of experts. Even more fortunately, it appointed as one of those experts the redoubtable and formidable Professor M. Cherif Bassiouni of De Paul university, Chicago, to whose work I have referred in the House on many occasions. Professor Bassiouni is not a man to be trifled with. He was not prepared to entertain assertions of large-scale war crimes without any accompanying evidence of the sort that could be placed before a criminal court. The commission of experts appointed him to be the rapporteur of the gathering and analysis of facts. He has been hard at work and has established a database which includes the names of about 1,000 people against whom, if they are to be placed on trial, it may be possible to secure the necessary evidence of serious criminal offences. Professor Bassiouni is a man not to be underestimated. I shall return to his work shortly.

[Mr. William Powell]

In resolution 808, the Security Council authorised the United Nations Secretary-General, whom I had the privilege of meeting just a week or two ago, to produce by 22 April a report on how the Council might proceed to deal with the prosecution of persons wanted for war crimes and crimes in Yugoslavia. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred to that report this afteroon. My first plea to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, and through him to our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is that when the Secretary-General puts his report before the Security Council, the Council is urged to proceed as rapidly as possible to a satisfactory conclusion. From discussions I had recently in New York with the Security Council president for this month—the representative of Pakistan—I know that he wants the Council to move quickly. However, the report is to be produced by 22 April and May will arrive shortly, bringing a new Security Council president. No doubt, these matters will then take a week or two—perhaps more—to be resolved satisfactorily.

The task of prosecuting the 1,000 or so people whose names are on the database that Professor Bassiouni has established is indeed formidable. Some of the problems must be faced head-on by the members of the Security Council and by the international community at large. It will probably take two years to prosecute 1,000 people. Court buildings will be required; a prosecutor will be necessary, and he will need a staff; there will have to be an indictment chamber—hon. Members may call it what they will—for processing the applications of any special prosecutor with a view to bringing persons to trial. There are, of course, issues such as whether people should be tried in their absence. Indeed, there are all sorts of practical problems. However, these are no greater—in my view, they are rather less great—than the practical problems of bringing to trial alleged war criminals resident in this country who may have committed unspeakable offences in Nazi-occupied territory 50 years ago, and we have provided a budget of about £10 million each year for the purpose of bringing those people to trial.

Although in the case of Yugoslavia the problems are great, they are not insuperable. Where there is a will, there is a way. Having talked to more than two thirds of the members of the Security Council in recent weeks, I am certain that there is a will and that the Council can move to a satisfactory conclusion. I suggest that the Council appoint a chief judge at a very early stage. A court centre will be needed. There are only three possible locations—Trieste in Italy, Ljubljana in Slovenia and Pecs in Hungary. Trieste will probably be the choice. I hope that discussions are being held with the Italian Government to establish whether the necessary space can be made available there.

Above all else, a special prosecutor will be needed, and he will need a staff to collate and prepare the evidence and to place before the indicting chamber such information, warrants, and so on, as may be necessary. I see no reason why, if the Security Council moves relatively quickly, it should not be possible to start some criminal trials before the end of this year. There is one very obvious candidate for appointment as special prosecutor—none other than Professor M. Cherif Bassiouni, a man of very great experience who has been consulted on many occasions by Governments across the world in relation to war crimes. The sooner he can be appointed and his office established, the better.

As the Secretary-General has pointed out, all this will cost money. Professor Bassiouni's own estimate is £50 million for a two-year period. I am delighted to say that, as one would expect, the Government of Canada have taken a very responsible and encouraging initiative. They have offered money, to be paid into a trust account for this purpose as soon as such an account can be established, and staff to assist the special prosecutor. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House might suggest to our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary that Great Britain should follow Canada's admirable lead, which I know that other countries are interested in following. Resources will be required, but this action is necessary. The world is appalled at the things we have seen on our television screens, heard about on our radios, and read about in our newspapers. The world is entitled to say that this is not right. We cannot allow it to happen without doing everything possible to ensure that the criminals are brought to justice. If the United Kingdom and other countries are able to take action in respect of unspeakable crimes in Nazi-occupied Germany, surely we can do similarly in respect of what happened in Yugoslavia not 50 years or even 15 months ago but in the very recent past.

Two deficiencies need to be dealt with. War crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity are outlawed by successive Geneva conventions. The world has said on many occasions that such behaviour is outside the realm of what can be accepted by a civilised world community. The trouble about the Geneva conventions is that they do not provide the means by which these activities can be made justiciable. A tribunal would give effect to what is contained in the Geneva conventions, which would provide a means by which the leaders responsible for ordering genocide, mass rape and other crimes could be held to account on this earth instead of only at the eternal gates to the celestial world to which we must all aspire in due course.

Another aspect which needs careful attention is the administration of the ordinary natural criminal law which existed in Yugoslavia and which exists in this or any country which abides by ordinary human standards. Although murder, rape, torture and grievous bodily harm—crimes that we all readily recognise—could be tried by the domestic courts of Yugoslavia or any surviving parts of Yugoslavia, we must confess that people inside and outside Yugoslavia would have rather limited confidence in the quality of justice administered by them.

I pay tribute to the reporting which has appeared day after day in *The Independent*, which has brought many of these matters to this country's attention. I have no doubt that there have also been such articles in foreign newspapers, but *The Independent* has a remarkable record of bringing home to us exactly what is happening. An article yesterday referred to the so-called war crimes tribunals in Bosnia, which have been held recently. Its author was the east European editor, Mr. Barber. Anyone reading the article will know that, if what he reported is indeed what is happening, the quality of criminal justice being administered by those courts does not inspire much confidence.

We need an international tribunal instead of lynching courts—as they would be regarded in the constituent parts of Yugoslavia—because such a tribunal would administer

a quality of justice which would inspire more widespread support throughout the world than the domestic tribunals as currently constituted. There is no reason why an ad hoc tribunal should not administer the ordinary criminal law of Yugoslavia. In a report to which I referred before Christmas, Ambassador Correll showed that there was nothing deficient about the criminal law in Yugoslavia before that country collapsed, so it would not be a question of introducing new crimes which were unknown when the atrocities were committed. The tribunal would administer the criminal law which was well understood by each and every one of the people who may have been responsible for murder, rape, grievous bodily harm or torture.

The immediate need in Yugoslavia is very clear. The urgency is obvious. The necessary will exists in the Security Council. There is no reason why we should not make progress very quickly this early summer to establish a tribunal capable of doing the job as we would wish. If a chief judge and, above all, a special prosecutor could be appointed quickly, the work could get under way. There is no need for any delay, although there may be practical problems.

The fact that there may be problems highlights one of the deficiencies of the present international legal system —the absence of permanent machinery to deal with breaches of the Geneva conventions on genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity and prisoners of war. The conventions have the support of the world community with very few exceptions, but we must have the machinery to make these matters justiciable and enforceable in an international court under the authority of the Security Council.

As soon as we have established a tribunal for Yugoslavia, I hope that it will be possible for the Security Council to establish a necessary permanent court not only to deal with what I call the Geneva convention heads of international crime—important though that matter is—but to meet some of the deficiencies in the administration of criminal justice in our own regions and between countries in Europe. I am thinking of extradition, the production of witnesses, and so on—transnational matters which lead to difficulties in securing the effective administration of a criminal justice system. As a supplement to, or additional feature of, our range of courts for dealing with these criminal matters, an international court should be established for the world under the Security Council.

I know that the expansion of institutions within the European Community is not a popular cause to espouse, not least in the House, but one of the biggest deficiencies in EC institutions is the absence of any effective supranational criminal court mechanism for dealing with crimes which cross frontiers. I cite the most obvious example.

Although it is hateful to people like me, who have been brought up in the British court system, to admit that the quality of justice administered in our courts is not the highest, the reputation of our criminal courts in dealing with IRA terrorists has taken a tremendous knock. We know how difficult it is now to secure the extradition of persons wanted for serious crimes and who are alleged to be members of the IRA and engaged in IRA activities.

I suspect that it would be easier to secure extradition from the Republic of Ireland to an international court rather than to an exclusively British court. An international court on which an Irish judge was sitting would inspire confidence that it was not just another British court. There would be British prosecutors bringing evidence established by the British police, but people would nevertheless be tried under rules which made it that much easier for those wanted in connection with serious crime to be brought before a criminal court. It would be easier for people to be tried properly, and, if necessary, punished properly.

I welcome the opportunity to raise these important issues again. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House knows me well enough to understand that he may not have heard from me for the last time on these subjects, but it is time to make progress not only on Yugoslavia but on the wider issue of world jurisdiction.

6.57 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I shall not respond at length to the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) but I shall make two frivolous remarks and then move on to a third and more serious issue.

The hon. Gentleman said that he had not received replies to two letters, one to the Prime Minister and one to the Foreign Secretary. He will be reassured that, at this very moment, civil servants in Downing street and in the Foreign Office are probably looking through their files to ensure that he gets a reply at least by tomorrow morning if not before.

The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to *The Independent*, which he claims—I have no reason to disbelieve him—is highlighting the situation in the former Yugoslavia. He will need the Easter recess to write the column that will be offered to him as a result of the praise that he lavished on that newspaper.

I now come to my substantive points. I do not believe that people have expressed sufficient revulsion against the horrors that we see day in and day out in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia. If only one tenth of the stories that we hear are true, that still represents a crime against humanity. The hon. Member for Corby referred to a thousand cases having been documented. I am not sure what kind of cases they are, but the human indignity and the violence against human beings highlighted in just those few cases show the depths to which humanity has stooped, especially in Bosnia.

I share the hon. Gentleman's desire to do something, and to bring people to justice if that is at all possible, but I believe that, when history comes to be written, western Europe, especially the European Community, will be condemned for what has happened in the former Yugoslavia. There is no doubt in my mind that the dash to recognise the new republics, largely at the behest of Germany, helped to precipitate the horrendous situation that we now witness.

I must voice the fears that some of my Muslim constituents have expressed to me—that the Muslims in Bosnia have been let down by this country and by the European Community as a whole. They often express to me the opinion—I hope that it is not well founded—that, if those people were Christians rather than Muslims, the western world would not have stood by and let the atrocities continue on their present scale. I hope that my constituents are not right about that, but I strongly suspect

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

that, if Christians rather than Muslims were being massacred, the west would not have stood by for so long and let that level of outrage continue.

I should now like to make four or five quick points, if I may, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was mentioned at Prime Minister's question time today that we have nearly reached the anniversary of the general election—I can see a smile on the face of the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). Most of us will recall that, this time last year, we were girding our loins for the last week of the general election campaign. I was out on the streets and then waiting to settle down to watch the "Nine O'Clock News", with the Prime Minister on his soap box. Twelve months later, I feel, as do an increasing number of my constituents, that the Tory party election campaign has been shown to be a complete sham and a bundle of lies. My constituents certainly feel that they have been cynically betrayed by the promises that the Government made in April last year and the way in which those promises have been thrown away.

I have a great deal of respect for the Leader of the House, but he was one of the Cabinet Ministers who went round during the campaign condemning the Labour party for its policy on national insurance contributions; yet a few weeks ago, the right hon. Gentleman, still a member of a Conservative Cabinet, happily trooped through the Lobby to support the Chancellor of the Exchequer's increase in national insurance contributions.

Twelve months ago, Ministers were saying that the green shoots of economic growth and increasing activity were well rooted and would bear fruit over the following year. But I must tell the Leader of the House that the past 12 months have been relatively fallow in terms of seeing the shoots of economic growth take off.

Among my constituents, there is a feeling that the Government won the election last year on the basis of a lie. During that campaign, and in the 12 months since, the Government have done a great deal to increase ordinary people's cynicism about politicians in general and Tory politicians in particular. It is a great misfortune that we cannot turn the clock back, because if we could confront the British people with the promises that the Government made last year compared with the outcome of events over the past 12 months, that would show that the Tory party, especially the present-day Tory party, is prepared to stoop to any level, tell any lie and repeat any calumny in order to keep its grasping fists on the levers of power in this country.

I should like to give three or four specific examples of Government decisions over the past 12 months that have had a serious adverse effect on my constituents. It goes without saying that the Budget decision to levy VAT on domestic heating will have a dramatic penal effect on many low-paid families in my constituency. It makes no difference how social security benefits may be uprated; many low-paid families will still have to pay the full increase arising from VAT.

I should like the Leader of the House to tell me and my constituents whether, if in the winter of 1994-95 they have to choose between leaving the domestic heating on or switching it off because they cannot afford the increased prices, they should switch it off and be cold. I should like at least one Cabinet Minister to tell me the answer so that I can pass it on to my constituents. I know that the Leader of the House is a man of integrity, so I should like him to tell me, and my constituents who will be in that position next year or the year after, what decision they should take.

My second specific constituency point concerns the Sikh community, and I have raised it with the Leader of the House before. The right hon. Gentleman will know that a European directive will compel everyone, including Sikhs, to wear protective helmets in all industrial situations. He will also know that Sikhs are now exempted from the requirement to wear crash helmets on motor bikes and hard-top safety helmets on construction sites, because successive Governments, Labour as well as Conservative, have agreed that they should be exempted for religious reasons. The European directive, although it will not reverse those two exemptions, will compel Sikhs to wear protective helmets on all industrial premises.

The Secretary of State for Employment has refused to take the matter seriously or to go back to Brussels and seek to renegotiate the directive. She fails to understand the anger and outrage in the Sikh community caused by the new directive. Sikhs are firmly convinced that, once the directive is fully implemented, either they will have to disregard their religion and wear the safety helmets, or, if they refuse to wear them, they will lose their jobs.

Increasingly, the Sikh community feels that one consequence of the European directive will be increased unemployment among male Sikhs. I ask the Leader of the House again, even at this late stage, to seek to convince his fellow Cabinet Minister of the urgency of the matter, of the outrage among the Sikh community, and of the need, if it is not too late, to renegotiate with our Community colleagues to try to widen the exemptions for the Sikh community.

My final point concerns section 11 expenditure; I have raised it before with the Leader of the House. Hon. Members will be aware that that expenditure, which has existed for many years, is directed towards local authorities which have responsibility for substantial numbers of children from ethnic minorities, specifically from Commonwealth countries. It has assisted in ensuring that children who are taught English as a second language can compete on a more even footing with other children.

There is a widespread fear that the reduction in section 11 expenditure next year will mean that many teachers will lose their jobs, but, more importantly, that many children will suffer adversely because they will no longer receive the extra teaching they need to be able to compete on an equal footing with other children. I plead with the Leader of the House to talk to his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and emphasise to him the need to get the Home Office to see sense and reverse the decision.

7.11 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): In the debate on the summer Adjournment last year, I was fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to raise some issues about the quality of life in rural areas. I did so bearing in mind the approaching tourist season, the ageing profile and shortage of youngsters, the changing agricultural base, the fact that one in five people in England lives in a rural area, and the background of a real urban/rural divide.

I said that any aspect of life today has a rural angle and that if we accept cost-benefit audits, citizens' audits, environmental audits, family audits and audits of audits,

we should consider the idea of rural audits for all departments of government, local and national. Unfortunately, my time ran out in that debate and I was unable to raise various issues which I hope to deal with now because a focus on rural England is urgent at this point in the economic cycle.

Small village schools have often been called the cement of society. Few who have seen what can be achieved in village schools would disagree. Obviously, a school for every village is not on, and village schools do not have to be small, but where bussing has to take place, it would sometimes make as much sense to bus town children into the country as the reverse. It must be recognised that it costs a local authority more to deliver the same standard of service to a rural area than to a built-up area. That is nobody's fault but a basic fact of life.

Equally with social services, emergency services, community care, health care, or indeed any service, the distances involved add on costs that towns do not have. No doubt we have all mouthed the well-worn mantra that rural shops, post offices, garages, pubs and even the telephone kiosks are the cornerstones of rural life and must be safeguarded. We often say that as yet another closes. Of course, it is true, but if the Department of Social Security experiment to encourage pensioners to accept automatic credit transfer of their pensions is made permanent, it will hit all small post office businesses hard, particularly in rural areas.

The uniform business rate has not been a full-blown salvation for some rural businesses, and often rural sub-post offices are in shared premises with general stores and other private retail businesses. More local authorities have hardship relief schemes, which I welcome, because they allow local authorities to decide their own priorities. The Post Office is asking the Department of the Environment to consider exempting from the uniform business rate the mixed business rural shops which are in post office use. That is a simple device which could be effective in money value terms.

SAVES, the Shopkeepers Association for Villages in East Suffolk, is keen to point out, rightly, that uniform business rate valuations on village shops are too high and that the criteria should perhaps be reconsidered. The Church of England's Commission on Rural Areas has recommended that help be given to village shops and post offices which are clearly community facilities. By the way, my attention has been drawn to an exercise in which £10 worth of groceries priced at an urban Sainsbury's were priced at £9·40 in a village Mace shop. On that basis, adding travel costs, it may be more expensive to shop in an urban supermarket, though choice may be greater there. It is all about affordable shopping.

"Affordable" is a word which is often applied to housing. We can all argue the need for socially affordable housing in rural areas. We can back schemes to bring it about and understand that it is part and parcel of planning. The Housing Corporation recognises a specific need for rural development schemes to provide affordable social housing in rural areas. It dispels the myth that countryside life is always idyllic because successive surveys show that the condition of housing stock is often worse in rural areas. The DOE should be congratulated on a notable shift in policy in that regard. Until recently, local authority attitudes varied. Now no local authority can duck out of its responsibility and we have the basis for a uniform national policy, subject to local conditions.

A good deal of public money has been invested in recent years, for example, in the Rural Development Commission with its rural development areas, into one of which a large part of my constituency falls. It has worked hard at encouraging community projects to diversify the rural economy, stimulating job growth. The RDC has argued for a completely new rural development initiative, forecasting that in 10 years there will be 100,000 fewer full-time employees on the land and 50,000 fewer related jobs. Even if the reduction is not as severe, the structure and operation of agriculture will change in a way without parallel in two centuries. There will be fewer land workers, but more people living in the countryside and more visiting it for leisure. Traditional agriculture will increasingly see itself as a countryside resource manager.

A recognition from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the DOE that land owners and land cultivators are countryside guardians and that their work is the best hope for our natural environment is a beginning. That phrase will be more acceptable to the tax-paying public than the misleading phrase, "paying farmers to do nothing".

One fresh idea is helping to regenerate rural enterprise. In my area, the Norfolk and Waveney training and enterprise council has a mobile tele-cottage, a bus which gathers people into one well-equipped place for work and training. Soon the idea will be expanded into redundant buildings. There is no reason why the rural village should be excluded from the global village.

National initiatives developed locally are successful too and should be recognised. A range of schemes, such as areas of outstanding natural beauty, the heritage coast, environmentally sensitive areas, and the work in my area of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, all contribute much to saving, restoring and developing natural habitats and the rest of the landscape which is our countryside heritage. All those things bring tourists into the area. Many like what they see, usage increases and many people retire to the area. That adds to the pressure on social services, the health service and all the other services, and in some cases local people cannot acquire houses locally.

Bus deregulation, like lager, has reached many previously unreached parts and there are more bus miles, but isolation still exists in many areas. The people become the victims of a vicious circle. Isolation leads to a reduction in services and to a holiday home disease, with services for locals being further cut, leading to yet more isolation. So it goes on.

As seasons roll one into the next, there is realistic optimism. Falling interest rates help rural businesses, home buyers and builders. It must not get out of balance again. The balance of rural tourism, as the English tourist board has stressed, must be on a scale compatible with rural locations. In the future, we may not be growing too much food—we may be nearer that than we think—so not all our farmland should become adventure and theme parks. We need a balance in farmland capacity.

Equally, in the local government review, we are promised an enhanced role for parish and town councils. Let us get the balance right and give local services for local people, provided by local people, real weight in the English countryside.

In conclusion, my three arguments are, first, we need a rural audit of Government policy; secondly, we must recognise that farmers are, essentially, countryside guardians; and, thirdly, a balance must be achieved and a

[Mr. David Porter]

balance against rurality must be redressed and then maintained properly. Being aware of the urban-rural divide means that half the battle against rural Britain becoming another country is won. The hard part is winning the other half, but we must try, because not only the quality of life for those one in five citizens who live in the rural areas but the health and well-being of our whole nation are at stake.

7.19 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House adjourns for the Easter recess, I should like to draw attention to matters involving Hoover, Raoul Wallenberg, national hospital radio broadcasting and employment in my constituency. The British like a bargain. We all know that that is why they tend to vote Conservative rather than socialist. On Monday this week, I had the privilege of being the first British politician on French soil to welcome the new Conservative Government in France. O that I had the same privilege of welcoming a similar Government in Australia, but it was not to be.

As far as Hoover is concerned, I thought that it was a startling marketing exercise to offer free flights when people spent more than £100 on one of their products. Accordingly, I, my wife and my wife's parents bought Hoover products. We filled in our forms and waited for the letter to be returned when we had made the choice about the specific resort to which we wished to go.

We were absolutely astonished when the fiasco developed. I can describe it only as a fiasco. It is a fiasco, and it has been a grave deception of the British public. The free flights to the United States campaign has boomeranged with ferocity against what I had always thought was a highly reputable organisation. It has debased the good marketing techniques which have been practised with success by other large companies. This appalling episode has brought disgrace to a truly respected household name with excellent products; it has been sabotaged by sub-standard executives, who have rightly been dismissed.

Why were the many conditions all in small print? Why did the Hoover marketing company rely on the fact that it thought that most purchasers would not understand the small print or would be satisfied to be fobbed off by excuses? Many of my constituents have written to me about the offer. As far as they are concerned, the Office of Fair Trading did not react quickly or, indeed, the matter seems to have been—dare I say it—hoovered under the carpet, hoping that it would eventually go away. I hope that this most unfortunate marketing exercise will be put right quickly so that I, my wife, my wife's parents and all the other people who purchased tickets will get that to which they believe they are entitled—their free flights.

My second subject is Raoul Wallenberg. About five years ago, I introduced a 10-minute Bill which was supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. We obtained an unopposed Committee on the Bill, which sought to get honorary British citizenship for Raoul Wallenberg—so many other countries have given their citizenship to this Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of more than 100,000 children, women and men in the second world war, and who suddenly disappeared in 1945.

I was unsuccessful in that aim, so I decided that the next best thing would be to obtain a memorial in the centre of London so that we could all remember the achievements of Raoul Wallenberg. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have asked me what progress I have made. For about four years, we have been continually frustrated. Only recently, discussions took place with the local authority, because we wanted a statue to be located somewhere near the Swedish embassy. Rather than the local authority approving a statue, the discussions have resulted in the offer of a park bench. That is a disgrace and an insult.

The first site to be considered was in Bryanston square, which was owned by Bryanston square trustees. The chairman approved the idea and was only too happy to put it to the rest of the trustees. The Rev. David Evans, who is in charge of St. Mary's parish church in Bryanston square—the pedestrian walkway would be affected—welcomed the idea.

A park bench is simply not good enough a memorial to such a magnificent person. Frankly, if it is a park bench or nothing at all, we will give the money to dedicating a wing in a hospital in the centre of London. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will pass on my concerns to the affected parties.

My third subject is national hospital broadcasting.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Amess: No, I must press on. The hon. Gentleman has just walked into the Chamber, and it would not be fair to others.

I am the unpaid parliamentary spokesman for national hospital radio broadcasting. Most hon. Members have hospitals in their constituencies with radio broadcasting organisations. We have been trying to get a frequency for hospital radio.

I am delighted to tell the House that, through the good efforts of Councillor Alf Partridge, we secured meetings with my hon. Friends the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage and the Under-Secretary of State for Technology at the Department of Trade and Industry. As a result of those meetings and a subsequent meeting with Mr. Peter Baldwin, who is the chairman of the Broadcasting Authority, we have made considerable progress. It appears that, at long last, there are to be pilot schemes. I hope that hon. Members who have been involved in the campaign will judge that it has been a success.

My final matter relates to employment. In the past year, my constituency of Basildon has attracted some attention, none of which has been of my making. Basildon has attracted attention for all sort of reasons. I have noticed that Labour Members seem continually to visit my constituency. I find it somewhat extraordinary that they come to the constituency which re-elected a Conservative Member of Parliament and which was responsible for having the socialist council thrown out of office last year. Labour Members seem to be making jobs an issue in my constituency.

The level of unemployment in my constituency is the same as it was when I became a Member of Parliament 10 years ago. I regret that, and I intend to continue to work towards changing it. It is extraordinary that Labour Members come to Basildon, especially when one considers

that the socialist council was thrown out of office because of all it did to destroy jobs in my constituency. Such were the disgraceful antics of the socialists in Basildon that they have left my excellent Conservative council with enormous debt. It has been left with debt on the Towngate theatre and other capital projects. The interest charges on the debt for the theatre alone are £1·5 million a year. The council has debts of £126 million, which have destroyed jobs in my constituency.

The week before the Budget, the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), for Peckham (Ms Harman), for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) came to Basildon town hall to launch an alternative Budget for jobs. So successful was that visit that I am delighted to tell the House that, in the unemployment figures which were announced two weeks ago, Basildon showed the largest fall in unemployment in the south-east. I hope that my hon. Friends will send out similar invitations to those four hon. Members in the light of their considerable achievements in reducing unemployment in my constituency.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Amess: No, I will not.

I hope that those same Opposition Members will support my plea to locate the headquarters of National Lotteries in Basildon. We heard a great deal about it being located in Liverpool and other parts of the country, but we in the south-east have lost many jobs in the construction industry and the service industry. I should have thought that Basildon was the ideal site for the headquarters of National Lotteries. I look forward to receiving the support of Opposition Members.

Socialists talk about unemployment. They put up boards when unemployment is rising. They keep going on about it, because the message is, "If you don't have a job, vote Labour." As soon as unemployment goes down, as happened two weeks ago, socialists on the Opposition Benches say nothing. I am delighted to tell the House that, on 14 April in the House of Commons, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade will launch the "Buy British Goods from Basildon" campaign. We shall hold a half-day seminar, in which experts will meet all my local businesses to assist them in exploring the opportunities to sell, not only in Europe but throughout the world, the excellent goods and services we produce in Basildon. I hope that the scheme, which will undoubtedly be a success, will be copied throughout the rest of Britain.

7.32 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am grateful to have five or six minutes to speak in the debate. The House should not adjourn until we have discussed family planning services, which is what I wish to do in the time available to me.

Ironically, I wish to express support for a Minister. That may be strange for an Opposition Member, but the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), recently stated that contraceptives should be supplied to teenagers in our schools. I support that statement, although it came in for a great deal of criticism from several of his Back Benchers. It is important that we get to grips with the serious crisis of teenage pregnancies, which has come about because sex education and family planning services are simply not good enough. They are nowhere near as good as those provided by our neighbours. The result is severe problems for the teenagers affected.

I remember raising family planning services when I was first elected as a councillor many years ago in the London borough of Waltham Forest. For doing that, I was accused of being a foolish virgin—I sent in a disclaimer especially on the foolish part. I remember the debate well. One councillor gave a long list of the different types of contraceptives, in which one wit interjected, "Withdraw!"

My resolution was that contraceptives should be supplied free. I was told that, if my resolution was passed, condoms would litter the streets. Of course, shortly afterwards, contraceptive services were taken over by the health authority, and family planning clinics started to supply contraceptives free. Condoms did not litter the streets.

We need to return to a proper family planning service. It has been seriously eroded and whittled away. It has been an expendable service for health authorities, as they have faced cash crises within the NHS. I refer the House to an excellent article by Nicki Pope in the *Today* newspaper of 26 March 1993. She gave some of the statistics.

Some 8,000 under-16s become pregnant every year in Britain. That is two for every secondary school. The rate is 69 in every 1,000. That is double the rate for France and six times higher than the rate for the Netherlands. In Germany only 14, and in Spain only 15, in every 1,000 under-16s become pregnant, as compared to 69 per thousand in Britain. That is the extent of the crisis. The problem is serious. Various surveys have shown that there is considerable ignorance among teenagers. Only 30 per cent. of teenage boys and 40 per cent. of teenage girls use contraception.

The article also quotes Ms Grigg of the Family Planning Association as saying:

> "We are doing our teenagers a grave disservice. We teach children to cross the road and stay safe, but we actively deny them access to safe sexuality."

We have the worst teenage pregnancy record in Europe. The Government must do something about it and take steps to reduce it. A much easier and cheaper supply of contraceptives needs to be available. The Government have moved in the wrong direction by putting some contraceptives on the limited list and making it harder for people to get them.

General practitioners and family planning clinics have a vital role to play in providing a cheap and easy supply of contraceptives. The service should be guaranteed confidential. I do not see why teenagers have to see their GP. They should be given contraception if they ask for it. It should be free to all teenagers, but certainly to school pupils under the age of 16.

Sex education needs to be dramatically improved. We need to get away from the priggishness with which the matter has been treated. Of course it is necessary to teach restraint and responsibility, but young people must be given knowledge. As Nicki Pope said in the article in *Today*, we need a comprehensive family planning service open in out-of-school hours. That should be in addition to improved GP and family planning services.

I am grateful to the House for the opportunity to say those few words.

7.38 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on managing to get in towards the end of the debate to make his excellent speech.

When the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) rose to make his contribution to what has been a wide-ranging debate, I slightly misheard him. When he referred to his right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), I thought that he was talking about graves. I thought that he was about to make a speech about the three 15p cemeteries. That would have been an unusual topic for the hon. Gentleman, but he went on to talk about not graves but raves. He has picked the right debate and the right member of the Government to address his remarks to, because if anyone can organise all-night raves, it is the Leader of the House. Since Christmas we have been treated to all-night raves on Maastricht and when we return after Easter we shall be able to have all-night raves on the Finance Bill as well. That is something that we are all looking forward to after the short break that Easter affords us.

One of the common themes in the debate has been a matter raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). Indeed, the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) also referred to it. It is the difficulty of getting replies to correspondence from the Prime Minister.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), who followed the hon. Member for Corby, said that now that the matter has been raised in the debate the hon. Member can be sure of getting a reply from the Prime Minister. I am not certain that that is so. My own experience has been as disappointing as that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton and my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting.

I remember writing on two occasions to the previous leader of the Conservative party, the last Prime Minister, about shipbuilding issues in east Newcastle and procurement issues on Tyneside. I received a very full reply from her on both occasions. Indeed, she did me and my then hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend, Mr. Ted Garrett, the courtesy of seeing us at one of the crucial moments in a procurement campaign after Prime Minister's questions. I appreciated that very much, particularly in view of the enormous calls on the Prime Minister's time.

However, since the change in the leadership of the Conservative party, my right hon. and hon. Friends—and I suspect that the experience of Conservative Members is the same—have been getting a letter from the Prime Minister's office thanking us for our letters and promising to reply shortly. But we never get the reply.

I have written to the Prime Minister on two occasions, again about industrial matters in the constituency, and I have had the acknowledgement but not the follow up. I am saddened to hear that my experience has been echoed by a substantial number of hon. Members who have taken part in this debate. I hope that by mentioning it from the Opposition Dispatch Box I contribute to the hon. Member for Corby's getting a reply to his letter.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton raised a specific list of constituency cases and correspondence to which he was not getting replies from agencies that come under the general tutelage, or are the responsibility of, the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health. What has been said about the difficulty of getting replies from some of the agencies under the Department of Social Security has been echoed throughout the House. It is now a common complaint that we cannot get our constituency cases dealt with. I hope that the Leader of the House will take note of what has been said and will encourage his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, whether in France or in this country, to address the matters that have been raised.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) referred to the way that Trafford is being poorly treated under the health authority's capital programme. I certainly hope that his remarks are listened to with sympathy by those on his own Front Bench, not least because, as he candidly pointed out to the House, he is my pair and obviously I wish his representations well.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to persistent juvenile offenders and cited a case from Tyneside. The issue is now probably the largest single cause of surgery work for me on Tyneside, and I suspect that that is true for other hon. Members with Tyneside constituencies. When I was elected to this place in 1983, it was very unusual for a constituent to come to the surgery and raise a question relating to crime or the justice system. Now things are quite different. It is either the largest or, given social security issues, the second largest cause of concern.

The issue is always the same: it is repeat offending by juveniles that cannot be contained by the system. It is dispiriting for the judiciary, especially magistrates, but also for the police officers, who are arresting and rearresting the same people and then seeing them go back into the community and reoffend. The position clearly requires review and I cannot stress too strongly the strength of feeling on Tyneside—I have no doubt in other inner-city areas as well—about this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) raised the question of access to the legal profession, meaning entry into the profession, and made the case for mandatory grants for the final part of the professional exams. It is demonstrably the case that ethnic minorities, people from working-class backgrounds and, indeed, women are under-represented in the profession, and that the mandatory awarding of grants, particularly if they could be awarded in such a way as to redress that balance, would go some way towards solving the problem. My hon. Friend spoke knowledgeably about the subject, and I think that his remarks found an echo on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Corby returned to a theme that I remember him raising before Christmas—atrocities in Yugoslavia. My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting spoke again, as he did before the Christmas recess, about the situation in Kashmir. I thought that his contribution to that debate was most moving, and he is doing the whole House a service by returning to the topic now, in particular in referring to the human rights violations in Kashmir. Perhaps that issue is not raised as often as it should be in the House, and my hon. Friend is right to remind us again just how serious the situation is and how many people are affected by it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South followed the hon. Member for Corby in talking about the situation in Yugoslavia, and then went on to say how deeply offended his constituents were by the pretty wide-ranging breach of election promises by the

Conservative party. He listed a large number of them, but it was not a comprehensive list by any means. The party which was committed to membership of the exchange rate mechanism, which gave a clear pledge that value added tax would not be increased and that the base would not be extended and which said it was committed to reducing direct taxation has now managed to put an extra penny on national insurance. The penny on national insurance is more regressive in its effects than a penny on income tax. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Luton, North is heckling me to say 1 per cent., which is a penny in the pound.

The 1 per cent. on national insurance is more of an advantage to the 20 per cent. of top earners than a similar increase in income tax would have been, whereas for the next 50 per cent. the position is relatively worse. And, of course, the eventual imposition of value added tax on fuel is undoubtedly the most regressive route that the Government could have taken to deal with the problem that they themselves created of the budget deficit.

I remember that before the general election—as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South remembers—the Conservative party leaders, those running their election campaign, added all our election pledges together, put them all into the first year, rounded up the potential cost, and told the electorate that Labour would cost them £20 per week. It was not true then, and they knew that it was not true, but they alleged it. They never said anything about their costing the average family £8·50 per week.

What is perhaps most galling is that, although it was said before the election that the Labour party was the party of increased taxation, after the election the Financial Secretary, who seems to be showing increasing signs of strain, says that the Labour party has no policies for dealing with the budget deficit. It is not possible for the Conservative party to have it both ways. It is possible to allege either that we would cost everybody £20 a week, or that we would have no way of raising money to reduce the deficit, but it does not seem fair to make both points.

The hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) spoke about the red terror that had pertained there and the debt that the local authority had inherited from what he described as an eastern bloc type regime. He made it absolutely clear that massive debt was a bad thing. Of course, his remarks were addressed to the Opposition, but they should have been addressed to the Conservative party, and particularly to the Government.

The position in Basildon was obviously so bad that the hon. Gentleman decided to purchase a Hoover in the hope of getting airline tickets to flee to the United States of America, and no doubt freedom in the west. To make certain of getting his tickets, he appears to have encouraged all his relatives to purchase Hoovers so that he could be absolutely sure of being able to flee the country. I can understand his disappointment at having a collection of instruments for cleaning carpets, but no airline tickets.

However, it is a serious point and there has been widespread outrage at the way in which the offer has gone sour. It is the duty of the company that made the original promotion, although I always thought it implausible, to provide the airline tickets it had promised. I agree with the hon. Gentleman on that narrow point, though he is about to be the beneficiary of a permanent criss-crossing of the Atlantic. I suppose that that is better than his coming here and telling us about Basildon, but that depends on one's point of view.

It has been a wide-ranging debate; serious and lighter matters have been raised and there is much for the Leader of the House to respond to. When he responded to the debate before Christmas, the Leader of the House, who needs no lessons in guile, concentrated on one or two key points at considerable length and then ran out of time. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will give us a more wide-ranging and positive response to the points that my hon. Friends have raised. If he can do nothing else, perhaps I can ask him on behalf of all hon. Members to find some way of persuading the Prime Minister to answer his correspondence.

7.52 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Perhaps resent is rather a strong word for the relatively relaxed occasion such as this evening's debate when we discuss at some length whether we should have a holiday, with large numbers of hon. Members declaring their undying devotion to not having holidays and praying that the Leader of the House will not accept their representations and will withdraw the motion.

Do you want a holiday, Mr. Deputy Speaker? If I may say so, you probably deserve one more than the rest of us and certainly more than some hon. Members here today, not all of whom were here all night on the various occasions recently. May I ask whether the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) was here all night?

Mr. Mackinlay: I am lost for words.

Mr. Newton: He is one Essex man who went back to Essex. I am not sure whether to say we are pleased to see him here, but at one stage I feared that there was about to be a House of Commons punch-up between Thurrock and Basildon. Perhaps the greatest compliment to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) was that as soon as he got to his feet, his neighbour, the hon. Member for Thurrock, came scurrying into the Chamber—no doubt to find out what stir he had been creating.

What I resented slightly was being accused of filibuster or guile to avoid answering questions. I can see what is coming down the path now, but if there is any sense of that, one of the reasons for it—I am sure that it is subconscious—is that there is no debate more calculated to produce in the person who is supposed to be answering it some sense of his own inadequacy in that he is expected to be an expert in the course of a few minutes on legal education, contraception for the young, Kashmir, raves, gipsies, international criminal courts, rural affairs, the hospitals at Altrincham and Sale, not to mention the affairs of Basildon in their various guises.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), I would miss these debates. That is not to be taken as an instant reaction to his suggestions about a particular recommendation of the Jopling report, but undoubtedly they provide an opportunity for a wide range of subjects to be raised and it is a matter of interest both to the Leader of the House and to those who have the good fortune to attend the debates.

I shall say a word about the speeches in the order in which they were made. First, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who courteously told the House that he would not be able to be here at the

[Mr. Newton]

end of the debate, made a fairly general attack on the way in which agencies and Ministers had been dealing with some of the constituency cases that he had put to them.

As I said to him then and repeat now, given that he did not identify the particular cases that he raised, the only sensible course is for me to undertake to look into them or to ask my right hon. Friends to look into them and I shall do that.

I resist the right hon. Gentleman's general proposition that there is any suggestion of the introduction of agencies or that people should deal with the chief executives of agencies on matters on which they have day-to-day responsibility. There is no question of altering the fact that Ministers remain accountable to the House to deliver the services under the aegis of their Departments. Those chief executives are accountable to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State is accountable to the House and that should be absolutely clear.

We all accept that there have been particular difficulties arising from the disability living allowance, which was the focus of many of the right hon. Gentleman's cases. That was because it was a new benefit giving hundreds of millions of pounds of additional help to hundreds of thousands of people and it proved to be a very large task to get the new system into operation in the way that people would like. Against that background, my own experience in dealing with local benefit agency people is that they give very prompt, courteous and helpful replies and that should be firmly placed on record.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: That is because the Leader of the House is a former Secretary of State.

Mr. Newton: I was the Secretary of State when the Benefits Agency was created, as I recall. Nevertheless, I am recording my experience in recent times as a Member of Parliament dealing with the benefits agencies on my own constituency cases. I gather from the reaction of my hon. Friends that they share my experience.

We heard a substantial speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) about the saga of his hopes, first, for a district hospital and then for a community hospital in his constituency, during which I had an uneasy feeling that, quite apart from my incarnation in the Department of Social Security, I must have been Minister for Health during part of the time over which his story extended.

I do not remember specific issues coming to me at that time, but I well understand the anxieties that my hon. Friend expressed and I was glad to be told in the excellent briefing that I received during the debate that my hon. Friend is due to have a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health towards the end of April. Meanwhile, I will draw the points that he raised tonight to her attention so that she will have a good idea of the agenda for the meeting when it takes place.

My hon. Friend also made a number of points about juvenile offenders, which were echoed by a number of hon. Members. I read the story in the *Daily Mail* about the 14-year-old boy and I accept that considerable public concern has been expressed about some recent cases. I am sure that my hon. Friend would readily accept, however, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already acknowledged and sought to respond to that concern with the proposals that he announced in the House recently.

My hon. Friend, in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), also adverted to more recent proposals from the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment about illegal raves and illegal camping. I appreciate the concern that those activities cause and the understandable pressure for us to proceed as fast as possible to translate those proposals into legislation. I know that a number of hon. Members who are not present share that concern. I thank my hon. Friends for recognising what has been done to bring forward the proposals. In common with many others, I have had the constituency experience of illegal encampments and the upset that they can cause. I, too, am concerned that we should legislate as quickly as we reasonably can.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) referred again, as he did in our debate at Christmas, to Kashmir. In a debate in which there has been endless reference to undelivered or unsent letters, the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to say that, in the wake of his speech at Christmas, he had received an extensive letter from one of the Ministers at the Foreign and Comonwealth Office. I shall do my best to ensure that his references today to Kashmir are similarly followed by some missive.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby also made an extremely impressive speech during that Christmas debate when he expressed his concern about international war crimes. Unfortunately, he did not hear anything following that debate. I shall ensure that my hon. Friends and I do rather better for him this time and that he receives some comments on his significant request for acknowledging the importance of making progress in this respect. I noted his commendation of the Canadian Administration, who have made resources available to pave the way for the action that my hon. Friend desires.

I have passed by the remarks of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser)—by accident, I assure him—about legal education and discretionary and mandatory grants. I should declare an interest because I have a daughter who recently graduated who is currently undertaking a course of precisely, I suspect, the kind that the hon. Gentleman described. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Law Society finals courses are postgraduate and, as the law stands, they cannot attract a mandatory award. Although the trend of local authority expenditure on discretionary awards rose up to 1991—the latest year for which returns are available—there have been suggestions, including those contained in a survey by the College of Law to which the hon. Gentleman referred, that the number of such awards has declined. That survey, however, also revealed that almost half the students who applied for an LEA discretionary award have received some assistance. We would be wrong to exaggerate the problem and the difficulties to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Variation in provision between LEAs is bound to arise in a discretionary system that was designed to provide a degree of flexibility. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Department for Education is monitoring the situation carefully. I shall ensure, however, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has his attention drawn to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) set out to raise the political temperature, as did his hon.

Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), rather higher than I think is appropriate in a debate of this kind. The hon. Member for Leicester, South tempted me—the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East even more so—to provide a full list of all the excellent things that have happened on this very day, 1 April 1993. Today is the day on which our community care reforms come into effect, aided by £565 million of ring-fenced money; 139 new NHS trusts become operational; the number of doctors in fund-holding practices has doubled to 6,000; the council tax has come into effect to provide a much fairer basis either than the rates or the community charge for raising local revenue; 155 more schools have become grant maintained; and all 480 further education and sixth-form colleges, including some very good institutions in my constituency, have become independent of local authority control.

Without attempting to mix it with those hon. Gentlemen, I am not prepared to listen to their suggestions that this has been other than a period in which much fruitful activity has been undertaken which will benefit people.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose*——

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman intervenes he will prevent me from saying anything else.

Mr. Brown: Having heard the right hon. Gentleman's list, I acquit him of the charge of populism and wish him a happy Easter.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman can do what he likes, but I can tell him that there is widespread support throughout the country for each and every one of the developments to which I have referred. The very fact that he felt it right to intervene with such a comment shows how out of touch the Opposition are with what people want. Even after nearly 14 years in office, it is the Conservative party that is setting the real agenda for political debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising tomorrow, do adjourn until Wednesday 14th April and, at its rising on Friday 30th April, do adjourn until Tuesday 4th May.

Television (Violence)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

8.6 pm

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): It is a great pleasure to raise once again the important subject of violence on television.

Last month, the Prime Minister warned of the serious effects on the young of a

"relentless diet of screen violence".

Following his expression of concern, the Home Secretary urged television companies to show greater responsibility by reducing the "diet of violence" on British screens. He said:

"Graphic scenes of brutality and killing have a direct effect on young people and are partly responsible for the upsurge in violence in society . . . I think young people—all of us—become accustomed to watching violence as entertainment."

Last month, the Secretary of State for Health, said at a conference organised by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children:

"A television diet of sex and violence can have a pernicious effect on children. There is undoubtedly a role for the Government to regulate what is broadcast, but parents also have a responsibility to establish the limits beyond which their children should not tread."

The right hon. Lady urged parents to instill the three Rs —responsibility, respect and right from wrong—in their children. In many debates I find myself in total agreement with Mrs. Bottomley——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he must refer to the Secretary of State as "the right hon. Lady", and to other Ministers as "the right hon. Gentleman" or "right hon. Lady".

Mr. Callaghan: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not mean to be disrespectful in any way —just the reverse: I was praising the right hon. Lady. I beg both her pardon and your pardon.

Following the concern about television violence expressed by the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health, it was announced that a two-week survey into violence on television would be undertaken by the regulatory body for commercial television, commencing on 24 March 1993. The output of ITV, Channel 4 and Sky will be monitored between 6 pm and midnight during that period. I welcome that survey, even though it is short.

Also reacting to the Prime Minister's warning of the serious effects on the young of screen violence, Mr. Yentob, the newly appointed BBC controller, pledged that the BBC would exercise

"more care and scrutiny to ensure that we understand the public sentiment and the public climate."

I welcome his statement. He also said:

"I don't think in the end you can just defer the responsibility entirely on the broadcaster."

I agree with him.

When asked about the problem of children being able to tape programmes screened after the 9 pm adult viewing watershed, he said:

"In the end, you can't avoid parental responsibility".

He said that he was unconvinced of a direct causal link between violence on television and copy-cat crime on the streets.

[Mr. Callaghan]

In the same month, March, when Ministers expressed their concern about violence on screen, Sir Anthony Hopkins, the famous British actor and star of the film, "Silence of the Lambs", announced on 5 March 1993 that he may pull out of the film's sequel. He said that he was alarmed at the popularity of the cannibalistic Hannibal Lecter, the film's principal character. Sir Anthony is reported as saying:

"We are living in an age of such horrors and there are such terrifying films coming out, that I think it may be time to say enough is enough."

I welcome that statement, and I welcome Michael Medred's new book, "Hollywood Vs America". His basic message is that Hollywood the American dream factory has become Hollywood the American nightmare factory. He charges that the Hollywood moguls of popular culture are foisting a torrent of violence and repulsive work on a public who want to cling on to old moral values. Although his book is about America, its implications for this country are self-evident. I have no doubt that the fat cats who are raking in the profits from each more audaciously violent movie, video or recording will continue to do so despite the criticisms in Mr. Medred's book.

The issue of violence on television is not new: it has been raised many times, both inside and outside the House. The right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), when he was a Minister, replying to a debate on young people and violent crime on 6 December 1985, said:

"Several hon. Members referred to concern about violence on television and its impact. Like so many of those matters, it is not easy to determine what that impact is. I think—I am one of them—that we are entitled to rely on common sense, and common sense must lead us to suspect that the constant diet of violence, particularly for young and impressionable minds, leads to some desensitisation, and . . . can encourage people to go out and engage in violence. It can create the impression that violence is a normal response to everyday problems in society.

We must also look at what research tells us. Again, the message is not entirely clear, but there is no doubt that the overall conclusion is that, despite extensive studies, it is not possible to demonstrate that films on television do or do not exercise a socially harmful influence."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 585.]

The subject is not a new one, and I may be asked why I am once again raising it on the Floor of the House. The comments of Ministers and Sir Anthony Hopkins led me to do so. Having viewed television programmes in various countries, I am convinced that those produced here are the best in the world. When I am abroad, I cannot wait to get back to look at our television. However, that does not mean that our programmes cannot be improved, as I am sure the broadcasting authorities would agree.

I became seriously concerned about violence on television and its effect on the very young when, two or three years ago, the world's press was focused on my constituency because of the alleged satanic abuse of children in the area. It was the word "satanic" that drew the attention of the press. The social services department in the Rochdale district had taken several children into care when they and their teachers in a local school became concerned about the strange behaviour of a disturbed child in the school. The boy was screaming, hiding in cupboards and talking about ghosts. The social workers and teachers were convinced that the child and those with whom he associated had been subjected to satanic abuse, so he was taken into care.

It was stated at the subsequent court case that the child, aged about six, had been allowed by his parents to watch horror videos such as "Nightmare on Elm Street" until 1 am. It is no wonder that the child, who was only six, was disturbed and screamed and hid in cupboards. The social workers were criticised in court because they had not followed the procedures laid down in the Butler-Sloss recommendations following the Cleveland case. If the social workers had done so, the case would not have come to court. There are many lessons to be learned about the behaviour of irresponsible parents, videos and codes of practice from that case in my constituency.

A *Sunday Mirror* survey taken in March this year confirms my fears about the use of videos by children, as did the case in my constituency. It found that half the children under the age of 16 had television sets in their bedrooms, and their parents had little idea what they watched or how late they did so, as they lay in bed videoing and replaying what they liked.

I am convinced that we need to tighten our laws on videos, even though the Video Recordings Act 1984 gave powers to control what is shown on screen. Sadly, some video nasties are still available under the counter, and some companies still put out videos that have never been submitted to the British Board of Film Classification, including videos with material that should not be available in any civilised society.

Therefore, I welcome Lord Birkett's Bill in the other place, which aims to tighten up the enforcement laws on videos. It will give trading standards officers power not only to seize illegal videos but to pursue their manufacturers. I hope that the Government will support that amendment. I also welcome the survey commissioned by the British Board of Film Classification a week ago to investigate the viewing habits of juvenile offenders. The survey also has the backing of the BBC, ITV and the Broadcasting Standards Council.

The problem is not new. In the late 1950s, the BBC issued a code on violence in programmes, a code that was periodically reviewed and extended. The Sims committee, chaired by Monica Sims, head of children's programmes, television, and later controller of Radio 4, drew up guidelines in 1979. It included in its recommendations the need to review and revise the guidelines at least every five years. The first review by a committee of programme heads took place in 1983.

In December 1985, the managing director of television asked a Mr. Wyatt, head of documentary features, to chair an internal BBC committee to review the BBC guidelines on the portrayal of violence on television and to consider their effectiveness, although at that time there was no sign that viewers had suddenly become more worried about violence on television. It came about because the BBC had monitored public responses to television.

The committee began by looking at existing guidelines. Those had stood the test of time, although the principles remained constant, the considerations relevant and the dangers well described. Some key issues emerged as the committee went about its work. The first was the complexity of the decisions made and the inadequacy of any simplistic solutions—there can be no simplistic solutions. The second was the concern for the totality of violence on television and its possible cumulative effect,

rather than concern about individual incidents. The third was the importance of informing viewers by accurately labelling programmes, and the fourth the need to define the BBC's responsibilities. ITV has a similar code.

The committee then set up a series of seminars for producers to discuss the existing guidelines, to give their views on violence on television and to make suggestions. It asked members of the committee to prepare papers on news, drama and purchased programmes—the sectors that caused most concern. It met the director of the BBFC, looked at the classification system used by cable operators and obtained details of guidelines used by other European broadcasters.

The role of the British Broadcasting Standards Council, which came into being in 1988, is to monitor the portrayal of violence and sex and matters of taste and decency, to report on them, to undertake research and to adjudicate on complaints from the public. The BBC's constitution is set out in the royal charter and licence and agreement of 1981. It recognises a duty that, as far as possible,

"programmes should not offend against good taste or decency or be likely to encourage crime and disorder or be offensive to public feeling."

Despite all those safeguards, mistakes can be, and are, made. I deeply regret the decision made by Channel 4 to screen an interview with Aileen Wuornos, an American serial killer who murdered seven men. I regret the decision of Central TV to screen a programme in which the mass murderer Dennis Nilsen was interviewed. However, no amount of legislation can ever ensure that creative staff will never make mistakes.

Besides keeping to the codes of practice, producers must be sensitive to outside opinion and take part in a dialogue with the audience about what is truthful, honest, necessary and appropriate to show. Television is a powerful and influential medium and any powerful tool needs careful handling. There can be no simple solution to the problem. Television programme makers must regularly re-examine what they are doing and their relationship with the public. They must be questioned, and must question themselves, about what they transmit and when.

Most worrying of all is the argument that television is blunting our sensibilities, that viewers, especially the young, are growing used to a world in which death comes cheaply, and violence is the way to solve problems. That is the "drip, drip" argument. What is at fault may not be the individual programmes, scenes or times but the accumulation of such items. It is prudent for broadcasters to work on the assumption that, to some extent, for some people, for some of the time, television may promote violence. That is not to say that television is a leading cause of violence. It may reflect it, it may exaggerate it, but violence is in people, and there is enough violence in human history for us to know that television's role may be tiny.

Television has much to be proud of, particularly in this country. The response to the Ethiopian appeals, Live Aid, "Children in Need" and "Drugwatch" show that people are sensitive as never before to the hardships and unhappiness of others, especially children. Much of the credit must go to television. Credit must also be given to its role as a provider of information and to the pleasure that it brings in entertainment, particularly to the lonely, the isolated and the sick.

Broadcasters must take care about violence, about the overall picture of the world they present, and must ensure that they find a proper place for values other than the aggressive, the cynical and opportunistic. The programme makers' job is to think through their material and respect the audience. They can then seek new ways to exploit television's awesome ability to transmit to millions the humanity of others, to show us something of what it is like to be another human being.

8.27 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I congratulate the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) on presenting this complex subject in such a straightforward way and on not coming forward with the simple, easy solution in which some people believe—censorship. We want to encourage responsibility both in the media and the family. I agreed with much of what the hon. Gentleman said.

One of the difficulties that we have to face up to is the reluctance of some in the media to accept that there is any relationship between violence and what we see on the screen, be it the big screen at the movie, or its translation into video, which we then see on television, or the original creative work of television. The hon. Gentleman quoted a much-respected figure from television, who has great experience of television—Mr. Alan Yentob. He does not accept, according to the hon. Gentleman, that there is a relationship. In one respect he is right. No one has proved that there is a casual relationship, a point to which I shall return later.

The hon. Gentleman reflects a view that I accepted myself when I worked in television because I wanted the freedom that all producers and interviewers seek when they carry out their responsibilities.

Alan Yentob was recently reported as saying:

"I think we have real responsibilities . . . to try to make programmes that reflect the world as it is".

A comment on that was contained in a letter to *The Times* which said:

"It might be to the benefit of us all if the BBC screened a greater proportion of programmes showing the more civilised aspects of our society and the need to aspire to an improved moral climate."

That is an important point. Some of us recognise that there is some relationship between the media and public taste.

On the same day, in another letter in *The Times*, Mr. Waddington, director of criminal justice studies at the department of sociology at the university of Reading, referred to the question whether the impact of media violence on crime is as serious as some people make out. He concluded:

"If a link is not established, then mere entertainment might be needlessly restricted. If, on the other hand, there is a link which the ingenuity of researchers has yet to establish, the consequences of brutalisation might be calamitous. Given this asymmetry, prudence surely demands that the diet of media violence should be curtailed."

The hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton quoted reports which appeared in *The Sunday Times* by Michael Medved, who made a brilliant, cruel analysis of some of the products of Hollywood in recent times. Who can deny that in recent years we have seen an increasing diet of media violence?

The hon. Gentleman referred to a quote concerning Sir Anthony Hopkins, who, in 1991, was one of those nominated best actor of the year. Mr. Medved said that, of the five men nominated for the best actor award, three

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

played deranged and sadistic killers—Sir Anthony Hopkins in "Silence of the Lambs", Warren Beatty in "Bugsy" and Robert de Niro in "Cape Fear". Shortly before the release of "Bugsy", the screen writer James Toback said:

"It is a portrait of a tremendously charming sex and violence obsessed quasi-madman who is infatuated with creation and death. People are going to be astounded by Warren Beatty. He is a complete psycho."

Those are extreme cases, but they are role models for others that we have seen in movies which have come on to the screen through the video. We have seen other cheaper, not quite so tawdry, but pretty tawdry, imitations on the box.

My interest in the matter stems not from my involvement in the BBC or from having been a director of a commercial television company; it goes further back to a time when I sat on a committee which considered violence on television. It goes back some 15 years when I was a member of a working party of the IBA which considered the current code on violence. We came to the conclusion that, in general, it was a useful guide to producers. Since then, various changes have been made by the BBC and the IBA.

We thought that the code on violence recognised the need for some form of introduction which would stress that, while evidence of a connection between televised and social violence is conflicting, the possibility of such a connection must remain an area of continuing concern for all broadcasters.

We made other comments about certain modes of behaviour as portrayed on television as admirable, but we noted that, even in those days in 1978, there had been an escalation in the degree of violent realism employed, the difference being that the realism of television is far greater than that of Shakespeare and the classic Greek dramas where much of the violent action is off stage. In any case, I shall be deliberately elitist and say that the thinking behind such productions is of a somewhat higher standard, not to mention the language.

On television we have increasingly seen the use of the hand-held camera, tape and the light, easy-to-handle mobile camera which allows the depiction of fictional scenes in horrific realistic terms and that has an effect.

When we considered the code in 1978 we said that there was no evidence that the portrayal of violence for good or legitimate ends was likely to be less harmful to the individual or society than the portrayal of violence for evil ends. We thought that there was no evidence that sanitised or conventional violence, in which the consequences are concealed, minimised or presented in a ritualistic way is innocuous. We also recognised that dramatic truth may occasionally demand the portrayal of a sadistic character.

However, we strongly objected to ingenious and unfamiliar methods of inflicting pain or injury, particularly if capable of easy imitation. We thought that if such portrayals were to be shown they should first have the most careful consideration. We discussed and made recommendations on other matters such as children's cartoons, and so on, and we did not think that, on balance, they did much harm.

However, we were to some extent influenced, and as time has gone by I have become more influenced, by research by Dr. William A. Belson published in a book entitled "Television Violence and the Adolescent Boy" in late 1978. I do not know what Dr. Belson is now, but he was then a reader in research methods at North East London polytechnic, a consultant in the techniques of social and business research and a fellow of the British Psychological Society. This research was funded by the Columbia Broadcasting System.

We considered some of Dr. Belson's evidence, but, since then, I have studied it a little more carefully. His most noteworthy conclusions were that

"high exposure to television violence increases the degree to which boys"—

he is specifically referring to boys in the East End who were his subjects—

"engage in serious violence".

On the evidence of the inquiry he adumbrated five types of television violence which appeared to be the more potent in releasing serious violence by boys. It is important that he concentrated on boys because on the whole, though not exclusively because there is an increasing trend towards violence among young girls, it is the young man who is the most violent member of the human race in modern society.

Mr. Belson said that the more potent types of television violence in releasing serious violence by boys were:

"(a) plays or films in which violence occurs in the context of close personal relations;
(b) violent programmes in which the violence appears to have been 'just thrown in for its own sake' . . .
(c) programmes presenting fictional violence of a realistic kind;
(d) programmes in which the violence is presented as being in a good cause;
(e) Westerns of the violent kind."

He added:

"By contrast, there was but little or no support for the hypotheses that exposure to the following kinds of programme output increases serious violence by boys.
(a) sporting programmes presenting violent behaviour . . .
(b) violent cartoons including Tom and Jerry;
(c) science fiction violence;
(d) slapstick comedy presenting violence or verbal abuse."

Looking at the book afresh, that appears to me to amount to a lot of common sense. Mr. Belson wondered what could be done about such violence and that is the problem that we face; it certainly is for me because, as I said earlier, I do not advocate censorship, unless we are talking about video nasties, on which we have already had legislation. It may be that the tightening of the controls will be enough. As the hon. Gentleman said, such legislation has been debated in the other place. If one reads between the lines of a recent article in the *Daily Mail* by James Furman, director of the British Board of Film Classification, and of an interview that he gave to another newspaper, I would not be surprised if he would not have to buy and willingly buy a system of video nasties censorship. If I am wrong, and if I have maligned Mr. Furman, I regret it—and I am sure that he will find an opportunity to correct any false impression that I may have given.

We must accept, both in movies that are shown on television and in some television programmes, that there is a cheapening of human values. There is a nasty kind of violence. I take that seriously and Mr. Belson's research is still important and significant. He believes that we should cut the violence presented on television. He states that the necessary reduction in the amount of violence is

significant. One cannot do without it altogether because many important matters, plots and stories depend on violence. He added:

"As far as serious violence in concerned, there is a well-supported case for a major reduction in the total amount of violence shown on television.

At the same time . . . the cut-back in television violence does not have necessarily to be complete, for the increase in serious violence by boys does not appear to occur until the accumulated input has gone beyond a certain level. In other words, there appears to be scope for the presentation of a certain amount of violence without the production of serious violence in boy viewers.

However, if we are interested in reducing the degree to which television stimulates the relatively non-serious forms of violence in boys, then the cut-back in television violence would have to be very drastic indeed".

I guess that would go too far for most of us.

As to the kind of violence most necessary to eliminate, he remarked

"If the amount of television violence is to be reduced, then one has to decide upon criteria for reducing it. At a purely commonsense level, this should not be difficult once production staff accept television violence first and foremost as potentially damaging rather than regarding it principally as potential entertainment."

I agree with that.

8.42 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) on choosing to raise a matter of particular interest to, and within the personal experience of, most of our constituents.

I spent the greater part of my professional career working in the mechanical media—as a sound broadcaster, radio producer, and television producer and director. It is a sad fact that over the years that I have been associated with the industry, I have watched and heard standards—particularly of language—decline. Many right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House are concerned about bad language, explicit sex and, above all, explicit violence on television and video and, to a lesser extent, on radio.

My personal concern is not individual programmes but the cumulative effect of a saturation assault on the senses of the audience. Some will argue that for a normal viewer —whatever or whoever that may be—exposure to a nightly diet of verbal and visual abuse that is the stuff of current programming has little or no long-term adverse effect. I cannot accept that. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), I cannot believe that advertisers pay hundreds of thousands of pounds annually creating and broadcasting advertisements for the specific and powerful purpose of altering people's purchasing habits, and that right hon. and hon. Members vie for air time to alter the public's political thinking, but that what is seen on news programmes, in documentaries and in drama does not have a similar, brain-washing and perhaps brain-curdling effect.

Can any right hon. or hon. Member put hand on heart and say that reports of IRA atrocities in Northern Ireland or closer to home, on the mainland, and even such terrible events as the Warrington bombing and the sad and grim funerals that followed still have the same impact as those first reported far too many murdering years ago?

Is it not a fact that all our senses, not just those of the young and still innocent, are dulled by the grim repetition of death universally that we see reported night after night from the four corners of the earth? Do reports of war or famine in Somalia or Bosnia tear at the heart strings and purse strings in the way that Jonathan Dimbleby's first reports from Ethiopia did many years ago?

If the answer to those questions is no, is that because the human mind can only take so much of a battering of violence and that, as a result of relentless repetition, even the most sensitive and responsive have become inured to human suffering?

I have dealt so far only with events that one would expect to see on our screens, hear about on our radios, and read about in our newspapers. We must acknowledge, however, that modern technology has made the graphic reporting of war, pestilence and death more immediate and has brought them into the heart of our homes in a way that was not possible only a few years ago. For good or ill, that progress is irreversible. Today's children are subjected to far more scenes of death and violence on television than anything that most of us experienced in our own childhood.

We are compounding that quota of grim viewing by adding, under the guise of entertainment, still more scenes of violence and death. My wife and I try hard to monitor our 12-year-old son's viewing and to ensure that the programmes that he watches are suited to the capacities, sensitivities and tolerances of a young, active, inquiring and impressionable mind. However, all too frequently we discover that well before the much-vaunted threshold, material is broadcast that at least I find unacceptable because of its language and violent content.

There is no denying that my son and his young friends like blood-and-thunder films or that they revel in the more brutal action crime series, and the like. It is often argued, with some justification, that children are bloodthirsty little people by nature and that they have always been so. After all, the Punch and Judy shows that many of us enjoyed in the past are not the most peaceful of theatricals. There is, however, a world of difference between the Punch and Judy professor and the fictional and fantasy warmongers of, for example, "Dr. Who" and the much more realistic and foul-mouthed villains of today's television series and dramas.

I will not rehearse a litany of titles. Suffice it to say that on any given evening a family household is unlikely to be deprived of the dubious pleasure of finding on one channel or another, usually well within peak viewing time, something to satisfy any likely craving for televisual aggression. Were too peaceful an evening to occur, the video shop that is seemingly just around every corner is open all hours to offer lurid titles of extremely dubious pedigree.

We have supplemented the available domestic television services with a growing number of satellite channels. I make it clear immediately that I support the development of satellite and cable services and that I see great potential in the future of transfrontier broadcasting. We must, however, recognise that, as with any new technology, there is potential for good and for ill.

We have seen the potential for good in satellite news services and in sports and children's channels that are capable of delivering a variety of information, enjoyment and entertainment from Europe and the rest of the world. Few would deny that satellite coverage of the Olympics or, sparing recent performances, of Test cricket from halfway around the globe has not brought pleasure to millions of sports fans.

[Mr. Roger Gale]

Nor can there be much doubt that coverage of famine in Somalia, war in the Gulf, or privation in the former Yugoslavia—however gruelling—has brought home the plight of human souls in other parts of the world with a vivid immediacy that has had a profound effect on international political response to those needs.

The potential for exchanges of culture—music, films, theatre and education—are immense. The sheer capacity of satellite transmission makes it possible to devote whole channels to, for example, religion, education or sport—or to hard-core pornography: that is the darker side of this most powerful of media. The launch of the Red Hot television service has, at least temporarily, driven a coach and horses through our domestic regulatory framework.

I am not one of the world's natural censors. In my time as a programme maker I pushed at the frontiers of some people's taste and, as a result, found myself answerable to the regulatory authorities. I do not want to curtail the creative and genuinely artistic expression of young producers and directors, even if they sometimes make what we may regard as errors of judgment. However, I defy any but the most brutalised to find any creative merit in a wall-to-wall diet of hard-core pornography of the kind that provides the sole format of the Red Hot service. I shall spare the House a blow-by-blow account of the channel's output; suffice it to say that the scripts are not the most inventive that I have had the dubious privilege of experiencing.

I concede that such material is available for open-channel daytime viewing in many hotels throughout mainland Europe; it is also true that hard-core pornography is broadcast by some European services—Canal Plus in France, for example—as part of a balanced programme. As far as I am aware, however, Red Hot is the only channel in the European Community that is dedicated exclusively to the transmission of hard-core explicit sexual activity. Let me make it clear that I am not talking about the television equivalent of top-shelf girlie magazines; the channel portrays much more than natural explicit sex. At least one of the three clips that I saw had heavy overtones of sado-masochism.

I think it inevitable that, if such a service is allowed to continue, its client audience will demand ever more extreme and revolting material. Should that be in any doubt, as one of those who visited and were sickened by the exhibition mounted in the House by the obscene publications squad, I am in a position to say that films featuring extreme sexual violence and paedophilia are all too readily available. The latter is now being transmitted not only through the post in the form of still pictures and on videotape, but by computer link—in which form it appears to be outside the law.

We are told that the Red Hot films are shown only to consenting subscribers who have bought the necessary decoding equipment, and that they are only shown late at night. I concede that that is correct. If transmitted within the United Kingdom, however, the channel would not receive a broadcast licence; and its films, if seized by customs on their entry into the United Kingdom on videotape, would without doubt lead to prosecution. One need not be a genius to work out that, given the ease with which films can now be recorded off air and copied, the growth in cottage industries supplying hard-core videotapes is likely to be considerable.

That recording facility also makes it inevitable that, while the source material may be encrypted, children are likely to be able to see films that are, by any sensible standards, highly unsuitable even for adult viewing. One of my constituents complained recently that her children—on whom she keeps a watchful parental eye—had come back after playing with friends whom she had regarded as perfectly respectable, using bad language and describing scenes that they had witnessed on a videotape that they had been allowed to watch in someone else's house.

For all those reasons, I—together with many colleagues on both sides of the House—have pressed for Government action to end the Red Hot television service and other channels like it. I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the recent announcement of their intention to try to proscribe the channel; I hope and believe that they will be successful should the matter come before the European courts.

I believe that a great deal is at stake. If we are not able to regulate what is broadcast to the United Kingdom by satellite—however abhorrent that material may be—not only will more channels spring up, but pressure will grow for still more deregulation of our domestic television service. Whatever lack of proof the experts may claim for any link between at least some of society's ills and the prevalence of gratuitous violence, bad language and explicit sex on television, common sense tells me that the decline in standards can and does affect the behaviour and attitudes not just of young people but of all of us.

I believe that not only the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the House of Commons and even society but the programme makers themselves are coming to recognise that great scrutiny needs to be given to scripts and pictures to justify what is shown on the screen. At such a time, it would be a sad and dreadful irony if through transfrontier broadcasting, which may yet offer humanity so much, the floodgates were opened to a tide of filth and violence.

8.46 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I join others in congratulating all who have spoken on the seriousness and depth of their speeches. My contribution will be very short.

Like other hon. Members, I am entirely opposed to the idea of censorship; equally, I believe that we must protect our children from the worst excesses of any possible medium. I do not wish to touch on what I regard as a separate issue—that of hard-core pornography—but I shall speak about the general diet of television, which other hon. Members have described as becoming increasingly violent, and about the lowering of standards.

My main point is this. I think it entirely wrong for society to blame one aspect for all its ills. The problem with television is that, because competition has become increasingly fierce and because the possibility of revenues from advertising, for example, has become smaller and smaller, programme makers are under incredible pressure to limit the amount of programme time between advertisements. In my experience of playing in live theatre, what has become increasingly noticeable over the past few years is audiences' inability to sustain concentration, and

to equate conflicting points of view, for any longer than would, in domestic terms, constitute the time before the first commercial break.

At present, pressures on the medium itself mean that pressures on the programme makers who are at the behest of ratings—because if the ratings are not high enough, the possibility of selling their programmes with sufficient advertising space becomes increasingly small—are becoming stronger and stronger. Many years ago, I had a conversation with the vice-president responsible for daytime television programming. When I asked him why television in America was so appalling, he said, "You misunderstand the nature of the medium. Television is not about entertainment; it is a marketplace." That is what we are suffering from here, because of deregulation. The pressure on programme makers is not to make quality programmes, but to sandwich advertisements.

If we, as people, are being programmed to sustain and concentrate on smaller and smaller pieces of programmes, our requirement to be stimulated to watch beyond the next advertising break—to pick up the programme again—means that programme makers are continually leaving us on the edge of a cliff. That is their whole purpose: they must retain us beyond the commercial break, because if we are not there, the next commercial break will not be there the next time around.

The decay in television has come about because what was a great bulwark against cheapening pressures—the security that the industry as a whole could place in the solidity of the BBC, which, at that time, was not under commercial pressure—is being eroded. That has happened in America. It is a model for what television will become in the rest of the world.

I agree absolutely that there are unacceptable programmes and that not everybody exercises the right kind of control over their children's viewing, but it would be entirely wrong to blame television for the increase in violence or for the decay in our moral standards.

8.58 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) on his choice of topic and in particular on the impeccable timing of the debate that he has won.

As the House heard from those who have contributed to this short debate, there is continuing concern about violence on the screens in our homes—not least, I suspect, because of still-rising levels of crime which cause growing concern among the public and a demand for more effective action to prevent and combat it. It is important, however, as the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) said, to put concerns about television violence in context. It is the purpose for which it is portrayed—its nature and quality—which matters. Violence is an integral part of, for example, many of Shakespeare's plays, reflecting the violent times in which the events described are set, so Shakespeare's violence is in context—a dark part of those times—and not violence simply for the sake of it.

Concern among viewers about violence is remarkably even across the years. That is no surprise perhaps, for people react differently to the same circumstances. In its recent survey, the Independent Television Commission's "Television: The Public's View" records that 70 out of every 100 viewers of commercial television found nothing offensive about programmes, with 72 out of every 100 saying the same about Channel 4, but 11 out of every 100 viewers cited violence as a source of offence. Unfortunately, these complaints are not broken down into programme strands, so we do not know whether it was the harrowing scenes of violence from the former Yugoslavia in news bulletins or the violence in drama or works of fiction that caused offence.

As David Glencross, the distinguished chief executive of the ITC, comments:

> "What we are seeing is a public revulsion against violence in society which is feeding through to a desire for greater sensitivity by television programme-makers and makers of films and videos."

He added:

> "Members of the Commission expect programme-makers and TV companies to take full account of that concern."

As my hon. Friend and others acknowledge, there is no evidence to sustain any charge that our screens are awash with violence, or that programme makers and television companies are indifferent to public concerns, but in no way should that lead to complacency. The broadcasters need to continue to demonstrate that they both acknowledge and respond to public concern over violence on our screens.

The broadcasting industry has more regulation and codes of practice than any other part of the media. I might add that, had the newspapers taken more account of them, they might now be held in higher esteem. The BBC's producers' guidelines are a good example. A section on violence in programmes opens this way:

> "There is much confusing and inconclusive research into violence on television and society. While it may not be possible to establish the nature of any relationship, it is prudent to assume there may be one."

No one can properly criticise that approach. It is one which is matched by other broadcasters and the regulators.

The Broadcasting Standards Council—no one's favourite body—offers an important warning in its code of practice. It says:

> "There is an initial distinction to be made between reporting and reflection in programmes of real-life violence and the use of violent actions as elements in entertainment programmes."

The BSC published a monograph called "A measure of uncertainty: the effects of the mass media" by Dr. Guy Cumberbatch, director of the communications research group at Birmingham's Aston university, and Dr. Dennis Howitt, senior lecturer in social psychology at Loughborough university. They conclude:

> "The facts surrounding the debate"—

the debate on how the media affects people—

> "are impressive: over the past 10 years, 2,000 studies have scrutinised the impact of the media and 1,000 projects have researched the relationship between television and violence. What we don't know (about the effects of the media) is probably more important than what we do know."

That reflects the sensible caution in the BBC producers' guidelines.

The ITC survey also tells us—a point that was made by the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)—that more people, watching the commercial channels and the two BBC channels, are more offended by bad language than violence—that 17 out of every 100 ITV viewers find bad language to be more of a reason to complain, that 14 out of every 100 BBC1 viewers feel the same, and that that number falls to 11 out of every 100 BBC2 viewers.

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

The British Film Institute has published a book called "Women Viewing Violence", based on research commissioned by the BSC and carried out among women who had had direct experience of violence and those who had not. The book's authors refer to

"women's concern that televised violence against women be portrayed realistically and sensitively and used to effect some postive outcome, such as public education or crime prevention".

It might have been expected that women—especially those who had themselves been victims of violence—would be more strongly against the portrayal of violence in any form than men, but the finding suggests that they accept it as a fact and as an unpleasant part of life. If it is to be done, they want it to be done in a realistic manner.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: The implication of the research is that violence does not worry people nearly so much as does bad language in the form of expletives. In some programmes, language can be extremely violent in another way, and much more frightening. With regard to women, my concern has more to do with the more realistic, sadistic violence that is portrayed in movies, which are then produced in video form and thrown in to our homes.

Mr. Corbett: I accept that absolutely. As with much of this research, one does not know exactly which programmes are being looked at. In any event, bad language and realistic violence often go together. The distinction is perhaps not wholly sensible.

Most concern among viewers is caused by films and videos that are strong on gratuitous violence—what I shall call the Michael Winner effect. I took particular exception to Winner's "Death Wish", as it seemed to me that its sole purpose was to smother the screen with as much blood and gore as Charles Bronson could achieve. Then, to raise a bit more cash from this exploitation of violence, came "Death Wish II". More recently, the Independent Television Commission has expressed concern about real crimes that become the subjects of drama documentaries such as "Suspicious Circumstances" and Michael Winner's "True Crimes" and "Crime Story".

It is interesting that when Clint Eastwood—himself no stranger to screen violence—collected this week his two Oscars for his film "The Unforgiven", he argued strongly that it is not a violent film, as violence is used to overcome greater violence. That is another concept, and I have to confess to having seen "The Dirty Dozen" and "The Magnificent Seven" many times on the same grounds.

The jury is out on the question whether rising crime in our daily lives is simply reflected in what we see on television or whether what we see on television, in some way and among some people, helps to encourage crime. But we should also remember that the people of this country lived in times more violent even than these, a century or more ago, when television had not been invented. Certainly there is a need for more and continuing research into the effect of the portrayal of violence in news, drama, fiction and other television programme strands, not least for its possible impact on young and forming minds. It may well be a question which can never be completely answered, but all of us, including the programme makers, have a strong duty to ensure that proper sensitivity is always shown in the portrayal of violence on television and in films and videos.

I confess to doubts about the impact of what is shown on our screens on those who watch it. There must be some effect, or advertisers would not spend millions of pounds with ITV and Channel 4 trying to persuade us to buy their products. But again, the success of advertisements may have more to do with the way in which they are done for the purpose of achieving what is wanted by those paying for them. As Dr. Cumberbatch and Dr. Howitt observe, "research which has examined audiences is rarely able to demonstrate clear effects of the mass media."

They also make a further contribution to this complicated debate. They state that

"market forces inevitably mean that the media cannot stray too far from audience interest"

and that the perceived problems are caused not by television alone but by many factors, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) said. They add:

"Isolating the unique contribution that television makes to problems such as racism and sexism, which are deeply embedded in our cultures, is exceedingly difficult."

Perhaps we should give the last word to Mr. John Birt, the director general of the BBC, who, in his Fleming memorial lecture to the Royal Television Society this week, gave this pledge:

"We can ensure that our programmes do not promote . . . cruelty and violence. We will do nothing to encourage anyone to think there is kudos or status to be earned by inflicting pain and damage to another human being."

I hope that that pledge will be endorsed by all other programme makers and broadcasters.

9.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) for giving the House an opportunity to consider this important issue. I congratulate him on the way that he opened the debate. His contribution has been followed by a number of thoughtful and well informed speeches, but he started the ball rolling, and our thanks are due to him. All my comments will bear on what he said. I have known of his sensitive approach to the subject since I served with him some years ago on the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. His interest is of long standing.

I know from the correspondence that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have received that the issue of broadcasting standards troubles many people. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) made a speech born of great experience; it was also the speech of a father. He mentioned Red Hot Television. I can say only that it has been granted leave to apply for judicial review. We believe our position to be correct, and we shall defend our action vigorously. The matter is now before the courts, and I know that my hon. Friend will understand if I do not comment further at this stage.

Violence on the news has also been mentioned. It is a subject that alarms many parents, who believe that even the "Six O'Clock News" and earlier news broadcasts can sometimes be very frightening and can make a deep impression. I am drawn to the BBC producers' guidelines on real life violence in the news:

"There is a balance to be struck between the demands of truth and the danger of desensitising the audience. With some news stories a sense of shock is part of a full understanding of what has happened. But the more often viewers are shocked, the more it will take to shock them."

That is the type of detailed guidance which the BBC gives to producers and which the ITC gives to other television companies. It would be wrong to assume that everyone who works in television is dedicated to the pursuit of violence. I know that that is not the case, and I do not believe that any hon. Member or anyone outside the House thinks it is.

I am also grateful for the contribution made by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) in a speech also born of great experience of working in a number of media. I do not blame television for all our ills, any more than I blame politicians or teachers, who seem to be the other whipping boys or girls. She said that there was pressure—not only commercial pressure—on programme makers from many quarters.

If I could introduce a lighter note to our proceedings, I must say that I have always thought that, however boring a programme, it is almost worth waiting for the adverts, which tend to be of a higher standard and which, if I am not mistaken, are a rather important source of revenue for actors who are otherwise resting. We should not simply dismiss the art form of advertisements, of which I am quite fond.

I also do not quite agree with the hon. Lady that commercial pressure always leads to lower quality. In fact, one could argue the reverse. A number of commercial enterprises on television have led to very high standards. One thinks, for example, of Channel 4's involvement in commissioning films, not least its involvement with "Howard's End". There are many examples of good, too, coming out of commercial pressure. Nevertheless, I take the hon. Lady's point.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) made a thoughtful speech, which stole many of my best lines—not, I dare say, for the last time, although I shall always seek to be there ahead of him. He, too, talked about the problem of violence and the contradiction involving the use of television as a powerful advertising medium. The argument is that, if television is powerful enough to attract enormous amounts of money as an advertising medium, we cannot at the same time be told that it does not affect the personality or character of those who watch it.

I thought back to the remarkable study on the problem of violence carried out by Will Wyatt for the BBC. In considering that issue, he said:

> "There is the argument that broadcasters cannot claim television works as an advertising medium and at the same time claim that television violence has no effect. But television adverts are radically different from programmes in that they give persuasive messages about a particular product. They are designed to raise awareness of that item's existence and are expressly aimed at making the product attractive. They are also part of a complex selling strategy mix, including marketing, promotion and pricing.
>
> Television programmes, on the other hand, are not designed to sell objects or ideas, certainly not violence, which is very often presented as something repugnant. This is not to argue that television violence definitely has no effect, merely that the advertising analogy is false."

I am much drawn to that argument.

I shall now make my own case, before referring to the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). First, I want to remind the House of the regulatory position for television in this country. Responsibility for what is broadcast rests with the broadcasting regulatory bodies and, of course, with the broadcasters themselves. The regulatory bodies—the BBC governors, the Independent Television Commission, the Radio Authority and S4C—are independent of Government and are responsible for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting. Indeed, they must lay their annual reports before the House.

It is a long-established principle—and a good one—that Ministers do not seek to intervene in the day-to-day content or scheduling of programmes. Our whole regulatory framework is based on that arm's-length approach. Freedom from Government intervention in the media is an essential component of a democratic society.

The Broadcasting Act 1990 has created a clear framework within which the independent broadcasters will operate with regard to broadcasting standards. Section 6 puts a clear statutory duty on the ITC to ensure that every licensed service includes nothing in its programmes

> "which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling".

Similar provisions are contained in the annex to the BBC's licence and agreement.

It was precisely because of the concerns of many members of the public that the Government decided in 1988 to establish the Broadcasting Standards Council. The council acts as a focus for public concern not only about the portrayal of violence but also about the portrayal of sex and about standards of taste and decency in all forms of broadcasting.

The BSC also produces a code of practice which broadcasters must reflect in their own codes. The code was widely debated, not only by the broadcasting industry but also by many interested bodies, such as the National Viewers and Listeners Association and, perhaps most importantly, by ordinary members of the public.

This country is fortunate in having the best broadcasting system in the world. We will not let it be destroyed by a gradual erosion of standards. On that the Government will stand firm.

A number of hon. Members have referred to films. If films are shown on television, the usual television regulatory framework applies.

I shall now deal with the precise functions of the regulators. The ITC must draw up and enforce a general code, which includes a carefully thought out section on the portrayal of violence. All ITC licensees are required to ensure that any programmes they transmit comply with that code. If they do not, the ITC can impose a financial penalty, demand an apology, reduce the term of the licence by up to two years, or revoke the licence.

The BBC also maintains guidelines for programme makers. The governors reaffirmed their commitment to maintain standards in the annex to the BBC's licence and agreement, and have produced guidelines for all levels of production staff to which I shall refer later. In summary, the BBC guidelines prohibit the use of gratuitous violence, require that the consequences of violent acts are not overlooked, require attention to the scheduling of programmes with violent content, and give guidance on the use of clear warnings. Perhaps most importantly, the BBC guidelines warn of the dangers of broadcasting material portraying dangerous behaviour, which children might imitate, at times when large numbers of children are watching.

I am sure that hon. Members are aware of the broadcasters' family viewing policy. We know it as the watershed, which in the United Kingdom is at 9 pm. This

[Mr. Robert Key]

means that programmes before the watershed must be suitable for family viewing, while programmes after 9 pm may be suitable for a more adult audience.

The ITC's family viewing policy goes slightly further. It assumes that as the evening progresses there will be fewer children present in the audience and this will be reflected in the content of programmes. But within that there remains the fixed point. Before 9 pm, nothing which is unsuitable for children must be shown.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden, again with great experience and the wisdom of many years' interest in the subject, talked about sanitised violence. When my children were younger, I felt that sanitised violence was the insidious and dangerous violence on television. Therefore, many years ago, I took an interest in it, and I remember speaking about it in a debate in the House some time ago. The Independent Television Commission programme code has addressed the issue as follows:

"There is no evidence that 'sanitised' or 'conventional' violence, in which the consequences are concealed, minimised or presented in a ritualistic way, is innocuous. It may be just as dangerous to society to conceal the results of violence or to minimise them as to let people see or hear clearly the full consequences of violent behaviour, however gruesome: what may be better for society may be emotionally more upsetting or more offensive for the individual viewer."

That is very good sense.

So much for the regulatory position. Despite the care that we and the regulatory bodies have taken to ensure a strict regulatory regime, I know that many hon. Members believe that the policy is not working. The evidence that I have seen, much of which has been quoted in the debate and of which there is much more, does not support the view that the guidelines are widely flouted by the broadcasters; nor do I believe that there has been a demonstrable decline in standards. Similarly, we need to look carefully at the available evidence before we jump to the conclusion that there is some automatic link between a perceived drop in standards and any increase in violent crime.

There has been much research over the years on the possibility of a link between violent television programmes and violent or criminal behaviour. There are, as one would expect in such a controversial and high-profile field, claims and counter-claims. The balance of research has not produced any conclusive evidence that such a link exists. For each study which seeks to prove a damaging effect on behaviour, there is another to disprove it.

Perhaps even more interesting than the academic research is the research among viewers themselves. The Broadcasting Standards Council has done valuable work in this area, as has the ITC. Hon. Members may well have seen the recent report from the ITC—indeed, the hon. Member for Erdington referred to it—published on 24 March, called "Television: The Public's View 1992". That has produced many interesting findings. Unfortunately, it does not extend to the BBC, but, as I think the hon. Gentleman reminded us, 70 per cent. of the viewers surveyed found nothing offensive on ITV, with 72 per cent. saying the same of Channel 4. Even fewer viewers were offended by satellite and cable. That I found surprising, because so often we are told that there is more that is offensive on satellite and cable. That survey showed that only 4 per cent. of viewers saw violence as a cause of offence. Indeed, the majority of viewers—some 71 per cent.—thought that programme standards had at least been maintained, or even improved. Once again, only 4 per cent. of viewers surveyed criticised the amount of violence.

I realise that surveys involve samples. Sometimes they are self-selected, and sometimes they are people who want to make their views known because they have especially strong views one way or another and are more inclined to answer surveys. Nevertheless, the survey goes some way to helping to put things into perspective.

I am reminded, and therefore gently remind my colleagues in the House, that it is often said that the worst judges of what is on television are Members of Parliament, because they hardly ever watch it. There is a grain of truth in that, but we must put things in perspective. John Thaw in "The Sweeney" has been replaced by John Thaw in "Inspector Morse". If hon. Members look closely at their television viewing, they will find other comparisons. "The A-Team", which used to worry me a lot when I had young children, has gone, and so have "The Professionals". Sanitised violence itself has been sanitised, so let us not leap to easy conclusions.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said recently, television is a powerful medium which must be treated with respect. Common sense suggests that it must have an effect on the perception of the world of at least some of the audience. Broadcasters must exercise caution. They must assume that there may well be some relationship between television and behaviour. It is for that reason that I was especially pleased to see that the BBC was prepared to admit that it had got it wrong in showing that now notorious episode of the drama programme "Casualty". For me, that was a clear example of the type of programme in which broadcasters need to be aware not only of when such material is shown but whether it should be shown at all. I am pleased that that seems to have been taken on board.

It was a breath of fresh air—I congratulate him on this—to hear the controller of BBC 1, Alan Yentob, saying of "Casualty" that the BBC got it wrong and would take more care and use more scrutiny to ensure that it understands public sentiment and the public climate. Let us not forget that that is a statement of success—a recognition that things needed to happen and have happened.

We have had enough of violence on our screens. Common sense is beginning to prevail. Programme makers and broadcasters know it. Judging by the comments of Sir Anthony Hopkins, actors have had enough of violence, too.

I should like to turn to another point raised by the survey conducted by the Independent Television Commission. It showed that 68 per cent. of viewers thought that parents should be responsible for children's viewing, with a further 23 per cent. seeing children's viewing as a joint responsibility between the broadcaster and the parents. Only 9 per cent. of viewers thought that broadcasters should be solely responsible.

I say now to that 9 per cent. "Think again". It does not matter whether the programmes that children are watching are in the family living room, in their bedrooms, at a friend's house or on video. Parents know what is suitable for their children. Broadcasters cannot be held responsible for parents who do not take the time to care about what the children watch. For goodness sake: where are the parents when their children are watching all that

television? This is a partnership in which both sides must do their bit, and in which both sides have the option of the on-off switch.

We need to recognise that most television producers are trying hard. Certainly, the BBC has tried hard with its production guidelines, which go into great detail. For example, it suggests that all people involved in production have a responsibility, whether it is the make-up artist deciding how much blood, the editor, the cameraman and the shots which he uses or anyone involved. That is something which must be commended. Not only the controller but everyone involved in the television studio, in scriptwriting, and all the important and technological parts of producing television programmes must be aware of the problem.

As the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton said, the problem is not easily solved. There are certainly no final solutions to the problem of violence on television. There is no cut and dried solution. Opportunities for viewing and listening will continue to proliferate. Technology is not on our side in respect of the number of channels available. Anyone who goes to the United States of America or a dozen other countries and has flicked through the television channels will know what I mean.

Therefore, we must have particular regard to our approach to the problem. The best way of maintaining the standards that common sense tells us are right is for broadcasters and programme makers to share responsibility with viewers, including parents, and with the regulatory authorities.

Parliament will continue to express its opinion and the Government will continue to listen and monitor the position carefully. We in the Government will not be bullied into any general censorship of the media, but we have shown already that when there is a need for action, we will act.

Greater London and the South-East

9.30 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Obviously, this is a wide subject and the debate could cover many matters. I shall concentrate on a few aspects of what is happening in London and in particular London's economy. I am sure that if we refer to the recent dismal record Ministers will tell us, as they have done on several recent occasions, that we are talking London and the country down. We must say clearly at the outset that to state the facts and the truth about what is happening to London and the south-east, as well as the rest of the country, is not to talk Britain down. Our constituents in the poorest parts of London—the people represented mainly by Opposition Members—are suffering most. We have no interest whatever in seeing their conditions worsen—quite the opposite.

What we see now in London is unprecedented and causes serious anxiety for not only the short term but the long-term future. To walk around parts of east London, such as the part of London that I represent, is a profoundly depressing experience in many ways. It is depressing to see what has happened to the environment and to public transport, how many people are homeless and what is happening to people as a result of mass unemployment.

In my constituency, I have noticed the change over several years. I have been travelling through Walthamstow Central station for several years. Certainly it has been possible to see people sleeping rough and begging on the streets in certain parts of London for a long time. But that never used to happen in most parts of outer London. Only in recent years has it become an everyday occurrence at the stations that I use every day to see people begging on the steps. It never happend a few years ago in outer London, but it happens all the time now.

While many of the comments about the rundown of the economy could be made about any large city, they are particularly disturbing as they apply to London. What is happening in London now is different from what happened in previous recessions. Clearly, the economic problems did not arise overnight, but the current problems are structural and will not go away simply as a result of a general upturn in the economy, if or whenever it comes. They require action by Government and by local government. One of the questions on which we might perhaps touch at some point in this debate is why there is no longer a strategic authority for London which could be dealing, or helping to deal, with some of these problems.

If we look at what is happening and try to measure the crisis, unemployment is a good element to consider. Certainly unemployment is a tool that has been used by the Government to control inflation; it is one of the main planks of their policy in controlling inflation. Since April 1990, the beginning of the current recession, unemployment in Greater London has risen from approximately 200,000 to 472,000. That is on the seasonally adjusted figures, not the actual figures, but it is a fair comparison. That represents 20 per cent. of the total increase in unemployment for the whole of the United Kingdom; 20 per cent. of this has happened in London over the last three years. In that same area, Greater London, we now have about 9,500 vacancies at jobcentres—a ratio of 49 unemployed claimants to every vacancy at a jobcentre.

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

In previous recessions, traditionally, unemployment in London has been lower than in the rest of the United Kingdom. It was in October 1991 that for the first time unemployment in London went above the average for the United Kingdom, and it has stayed above the average ever since. In fact, it is still going up further above the average. Even in the last month, when nationally there was for one month a small drop in unemployment, in Greater London it continued to go up. So we now have unemployment across Greater London of 11·7 per cent., compared with 10·4 per cent. nationally.

Within that total, there are some particularly disturbing trends. First, what happens if we look at this on an area basis? Taking my own constituency as an example, we now have unemployment running officially at 16 per cent. In some wards it is up to 20 per cent. The six east London boroughs—Haringey, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, and Waltham Forest—put a case to the Government recently for assisted area status, and of course we are still waiting to hear how the assisted areas map will be redrawn. The case that they put showed the depth of the problems in that part of east London, with the second highest unemployment rate in the whole of the United Kingdom. Ninety four per cent. of the electoral wards in those six boroughs have unemployment rates above the United Kingdom average, and very high rates of long-term unemployment, nearly 40 per cent. of the people who are unemployed having been out of work for more than a year. That figure is a fake, of course, because someone who is unemployed goes on to a Government training scheme for maybe just a few months and drops out of the unemployment figures, then comes back off the training scheme, is unemployed again and gets counted as a new claimant. Such people are not counted as long-term unemployed, when the truth is that they are. In that part of east London the job vacancy rate is even worse than the average for Greater London as a whole. With 100 claimants for every job vacancy, is it surprising that people simply give up hope of ever having a job and getting back to work again?

The second point that I want to highlight in regard to unemployment is what is happening to youth unemployment. In my constituency, registered unemployment among 16 to 24-year-olds is running at 25 per cent. That is the average for east London. In the six boroughs that have applied for assisted area status, there are 17 electoral wards in which male unemployment among 16 to 24-year-olds is more than 50 per cent. Again, those are just the official figures. We should remember that official figures conceal a great deal. For instance, many 16 and 17-year-olds cannot sign on as claimants. Given that the official figure is more than 50 per cent., one dreads to think about the true figure.

The short-term costs are disastrous. The police in Greater London recognise what is happening to youth crime and are saying that social deprivation contributes to it. Again, it is our constituents in the poor areas who suffer. There are now parts of London, inevitably the poor areas, where it is virtually impossible to get insurance for one's property, so again those living in the poorest areas are worst affected by crime. Unemployment is affecting schools. It is hardly surprising that when 15 and 16-year-olds know what is waiting for them when they leave school, they are reluctant to become seriously involved in education or to care what is happening, and many drop out or play truant. To compound all those problems, there are cuts in local authority services, particularly non-statutory services such as youth services which are designed to serve those at the bottom of the heap.

The long-term consequences of youth unemployment are incalculable. It seriously worries me to talk to people whom I respect who have worked with young people all their lives and who say that they foresee enormous long-term problems. They say that there is a lost generation of young people who have never worked and will never work because after five or 10 years of unemployment they will become unemployable. Training in low skills for low-skilled jobs which do not exist offers absolutely nothing. The serious long-term implications will not be solved simply by creating new jobs. There is a great deal to be done for those who have been out of work since they left school.

The third element which I want to highlight and which is also particularly relevant to my constituency involves what is happening to the black and ethnic minority population, who inevitably suffer disproportionately from unemployment. In east London, again in the six boroughs that I mentioned earlier, it is estimated that 45 per cent. of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population is out of work. That is the most disadvantaged group of all. When one considers the racial disadvantage alongside the age structure of the Pakistani population—which in my constituency is the largest in London, and it is a young population so it is affected by youth unemployment—there are bound to be serious long-term consequences. Another point that I have raised with Ministers recently is that grants under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 which are specifically designed to address racial disadvantage among people from the new Commonwealth are being cut. At the same time as the problems are multiplying, the grants are being cut.

In the past few years, public investment has been cut, everything has been left to market forces and the option has been to privatise, where possible. That has led to the decimation of London's manufacturing industry. In the second half of the 1980s, half of all the manufacturing jobs lost in the United Kingdom were from Greater London. Walthamstow and the Lea valley used to be a thriving centre of the furniture trade, but now not one factory is left. Similarly, virtually all the light engineering industries have disappeared. Discounting local authorities, the health service and other public bodies, I am convinced that I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of employers with more than 100 employees in my constituency.

The London economy is now imbalanced, because in the 1980s it became far too reliant on the boom in the financial sector. When it caught a cold at the end of the 1980s, London suffered disproportionately. Four out of five jobs in London are in the service sector and a high proportion are found in finance, banking and insurance. What is the future for that sector? What will happen if the European central bank is not located in London? I do not believe that many of the large merchant banks or finance houses will feel any particular loyalty to London or the country if they believe that there are more profits to be made and business to be done elsewhere.

Action to diversify the London economy, so that the necessary investment is created to revitalise our manufacturing and industrial base, has always been missing from Government policy. The Government do not place much priority on that revitalisation, but that is required to achieve long-term improvement in the economy.

Investment is also needed in infrastructure. Public transport is an obvious example. Why is investment in London Underground being cut? If one looks at the autumn statements for 1991 and 1992, the difference in the expenditure of the Department of Transport was virtually zero—about £7,000 out of nearly £6 million. However, that Department has now decided—it is not a Treasury decision—to shift expenditure from public transport to roads. Spending on the roads has gone up while investment in the underground has gone down. London Underground has made it clear that the reduced level of investment means that it will never reach the targets it set to deliver a proper public transport system in London, because it will not receive the necessary returns on investment to make the necessary improvements.

Once bus deregulation is introduced, perhaps within a couple of years, further cuts will be made to public transport in London. I sympathise with the action that the bus workers have decided to take tomorrow because they are being offered less pay for working more hours. It is not surprising that people who have been pushed around year after year have now reached the point where they believe that they have no option but to strike. That action may cause inconvenience to people, but it will be nothing to the inconvenience that they will experience once the bus service has been deregulated.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend may like to know that what he is saying is being confirmed by the various interviews being conducted by the media among the travelling public in London. The public are saying that it will be inconvenient, that it is a pity that there is to be strike action on the London transport system on Friday, but that they fully understand what the workers in London have had to put up with. There is much sympathy for the action, even though everyone understands how much inconvenience it will mean.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution, and I agree with him. We have experienced such reactions when previous action has been taken. In my constituency, Walthamstow bus garage shut down 18 months ago as a result of routes going out to tender. There was no doubt that when bus drivers in that garage took strike action to try to prevent what was happening they received a great deal of public sympathy and support.

A great many socially useful jobs will disappear in public transport. Why cannot we have station staff? Why are ticket collectors being removed from stations? Why are there no staff at night? I suspect that it costs at least as much in lost fares and the fact that people are scared to travel as is saved by getting rid of staff. Walthamstow Central station in my constituency is a joint underground and British Rail station, controlled by British Rail, which unilaterally decided to take away the ticket collectors. London Underground can do nothing about that as it does not control the booking halls and such areas. People know that they can ride on the underground free, walk out and their tickets will not be checked.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Has my hon. Friend received the kind of complaints that I have from constituents who discover that ticket machines are not working because they have been vandalised or because they have not been replenished due to shortage of staff? That causes acute embarrassment to legitimate travellers on public transport. Some machines are also fouled by vandals at night when there are no station staff.

Mr. Gerrard: Absolutely. I have dealt with the cases of constituents who have boarded a British Rail train in such circumstances and been made to pay penalty fares when the original problem was that they could not buy a ticket.

Ms Glenda Jackson: The all-party disability group had a meeting a few months ago on the issue of the difficulties experienced by disabled passengers when travelling, particularly at night, due to lack of staff not only on stations but on trains. A person in a wheelchair attempting to travel alone depends on staff being present at the stations. That is another area of life where the public are being denied access to the public transport system.

Mr. Gerrard: My hon. Friend raises an important issue, which is becoming a bigger and bigger problem—and deregulation on the buses will make it worse. I am convinced that private operators will not be prepared to invest in mobility buses and low-level platforms.

There is a ludicrous situation on the underground system. To revert to the problems at my own local station, I wrote to British Rail and said that removing ticket collectors would cause a problem as people would take advantage of that. British Rail is not worried as it operates a penalty fare system and people getting off the train at Liverpool Street station will be caught if they have not bought a ticket. But London Underground will suffer. Having refused to listen, British Rail is now erecting notices at the station warning people that ticket touts are in operation. Immediately the ticket collectors were removed, a thriving business in buying and selling travelcards was established. Passengers get off the train, someone buys their travelcard for £1 and sells it to someone else to go in the other direction.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is all part of the enterprise economy.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, it is all part of the enterprise economy. It never happened when there were staff.

It would be easy to say that it is all British Rail's fault, but I do not believe that it is good enough to do that. British Rail did not introduce the philosophy of low staffing and railways having to break even or make money without any subsidies. The inevitable consequence is such policies being put into effect. Many useful jobs could be done and should still be done, at a time when we are prepared to keep people on the dole.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): My hon. Friend has spoken about the impact of travelling and the loss of fares. Will he also deal with the problems of increased crime and vandalism? The latter was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson). I had to deal with the case of a woman in Sydenham who, since staff have been taken from that station, has

[Mr. Jim Dowd]

approached me to ask Network SouthEast to put close-boarded fencing up, backing on to the platform, in place of the chain link that is there at the moment. She said that that would give her protection from the vandals who turn up at least once every week to wreck the waiting room.

Mr. Gerrard: I am sure that that point will be echoed in many parts of London.

Hon. Members have asked me, when I leave late at night to travel home on the last tube, whether I feel worried about doing so. If I, or people in a similar position, do not feel safe, it is not surprising that many other people feel extremely unsafe and will not use public transport.

I have set out a whole sector where investment has been missing. That investment could be channelled through local authorities. We have a huge homelessness problem at the same time as thousands of skilled building workers are on the dole and capital receipts cannot be spent. The autumn statement did not help. To tell local authorities that only new capital receipts can be spent, when the housing market has collapsed and few will be interested in the right to buy, is to give them little. There is great potential for investment, which will get the construction industry back to work.

Reading the newspapers today about the implementation of the care in the community policy, I was struck by the opportunities that that policy could offer for the creation of useful jobs. Local authorities have to produce statements of need for the people who are their responsibility. At the same time, the Government are telling them that if it seems that, once the assessment has been done, the need cannot be met, the people concerned should not be told. Local authorities do not know where to turn. Are they supposed to produce a statement of need and then be faced with a court action when they cannot provide for it because they do not have the money?

We are told that it is all up to the local authorities. According to this morning's newspapers, the Secretary of State for Social Security has said that local authorities will have to make decisions about priorities. The trouble is that they are told the same thing about every service: their money is being cut, but they must decide priorities. Something has to give. People who should be receiving a service through care in the community will not be receiving it and local authorities will be getting the blame when it is impossible for them to deliver.

I spoke earlier of training schemes, for which there is a crying need. The existing schemes do not work. Often all that they offer is training for a non-existent job, so it is not surprising that people are not interested and that there are high drop-out rates. We need training schemes designed to produce a high level of skills. When I worked in further education before I came here, I found it extremely annoying to see the attitudes and what went on. Often in a poor area what was on offer was poor and of low quality. People took the view that a poor area whose people were unskilled and incapable of A-levels or higher levels of technical qualification and so did not need to be offered them, but rather something basic in the guise of serving the community. It was an insult to the people in those areas not to offer them high quality training.

I am sure that many other issues affecting London will be focused on during the debate—the national health service, policing, education and a strategic authority—and I am convinced that without significant changes in Government policy the present disaster that we see in the economy will continue and London will deteriorate further.

10 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I shall not say that I shall be brief because that seems to be code in this place for going on for at least half an hour. I shall say what I have to say as quickly as I can.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on his good fortune in securing the debate tonight. Matters relating to London and the south-east are clearly of importance to people in London and the south-east. But London, as our capital city, has a particular place and prominence which goes far beyond the concerns of simply those who live and are fortunate enough to work in London.

I want to concentrate for a few moments on the damage that Government policy during the past decade has done to the governance of London. Before the Government took office the London Boroughs Association represented all London boroughs, whether under Conservative, Labour or other control. There was a general feeling at the time that, despite partisan and political differences and despite the entirely proper change in emphasis from one authority to another because problems confronting people in different authorities vary, London was an entity, that it was far more than the sum of its parts and that it had a potential and a future from which we all, as Londoners, whether from inner or outer London, could benefit.

The Government, by their policies during the 1980s, have wrecked that consensus and, as a consequence, the people of London have paid a dreadful price. The split between the London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities was solely attributable to the Government's determination to abolish the Greater London council.

I shall not call this evening for the reinstitution of the GLC or conjure up spectres of filling county hall again with various bureaucrats working on behalf of London, despite that being a far more attractive proposition than filling it up with tourists, which seems to be the prospect for at least part of the building. Only the riverside building has been sold at the moment. The north and south blocks and the island block of county hall remain a white elephant, costing London council tax payers a sum of money to keep empty for no practical purpose.

It is not necessary to reconstruct the GLC, but there is considerable need for a strategic city-wide authority along the lines found in every other city, not just in Britain but throughout the western world and certainly in our most immediate competitor countries in western Europe. London needs to co-ordinate its transport and traffic management services, health, ambulance and emergency services, waste regulation, environmental audits and scientific services.

There is also a need for strategic research on policy and planning for land use, economic development, housing, training, environmental improvements, conservation, the arts, culture, sport, entertainment, tourism and many other issues, which cannot and will never be satisfactorily

dealt with by each of the London boroughs acting on its own. We now know that it is impossible to operate a different transport policy in Bexley or Croydon than in Hillingdon or Havering, and we are paying a fearful price in terms of not just the quality of life but opportunities denied to Londoners.

It is seven years to the day since the Greater London council was abolished.

Mr. Tony Banks: Seven years to yesterday.

Mr. Dowd: My hon. Friend, pedantic as ever, reminds me that today is the seventh anniversary of the first day that Londoners had to survive without a strategic planning authority. The intervening years have brought a degree of recognition on the Government Benches that they will have to row back from that—that certain things can only be done Londonwide.

We have seen the latest fiasco this week, with the launch of the London Forum—a collection of Tory knights and business worthies who are supposed to attract tourism to the capital. Its chairman is Sir Allen Sheppard, chief executive of Grand Metropolitan, and its deputy chairman is Sir Colin Marshall, chairman of British Airways. I can only assume that Sir Colin has been brought in to do the dirty on Paris or Frankfurt and is probably arranging to have their telephone lines bugged and their computers intercepted even as we speak.

The forum's other members include Rocco Forte, the chairman of Saatchi and Saatchi, and the senior partner of Coopers and Lybrand—a rich cross-section of Londoners if ever there was—hand picked, tame individuals who will simply do the Government's bidding. They are supposed to stimulate tourism in the depths of a recession.

No one would argue with that objective and the forum itself requested local authority members—but the Secretary of State turned that request down flat. At least the forum's members recognised that provision must be made for the genuine and authentic voice of Londoners to be heard when attempting to co-ordinate strategy across the city.

The salami approach to London's problems can never be successful. I hesitate to suggest how many London-wide bodies exist now, established merely to replicate the role that a city-wide authority could play as a matter of course. They have failed one after another or have met with only mixed success, but I suspect that we will see many more created before the truth finally dawns on the Conservative Benches.

On Monday, I was interviewed on LBC and asked, "Is it not the case that most Government supporters would admit the need for a London-wide authority in private, but because it has become such a politicised question, none will ever say so in public?" That has become the truth that dare not speak its name on the Government Benches. The reinstatement of a London-wide authority will come about one day. The issue will go away. One will hardly find a Conservative supporter at the time who will admit ever to having been in favour of scrapping the GLC in the first place—just as no Government supporter will admit today to being enthusiastic about the poll tax. The explanation will probably follow the same lines—"It was that woman. She made us do it. We didn't really understand it all. She said it would all be all right." The truth for Londoners is that the absence of a London-wide authority has been far from all right.

To give right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House a grasp of London's loss, I will relate an incident that occurred last year, when I was mayor of Lewisham and had the privilege of attending the final service of the closure of Cane Hill mental institution in Coulsdon. I was pleased to observe that so many residents had gone on to receive a more caring and appropriate form of support in the community than could be offered by that place.

It should be realised, however, that, when it originated nearly a century ago, Cane Hill was a very advanced facility of its kind, for its time. It was established in the 1890s by the London county council, which took the brave step of providing for sufferers from acute mental illness by buying land in the distant area of Coulsdon, thus helping people who would otherwise have been untreated, unsupported and on the streets. That our predecessors in the LCC were able and willing to do that at the turn of the century speaks volumes for their vision.

When I attended that service, it struck me that social care should have moved on in the better part of a century. We should be able to provide a far more sensitive, secure and compassionate service. But where in London is the necessary authority? Who will provide such a service today, so that, in a hundred years, those who come after us will thank us for our perception, our compassion and our ability to make decisions and provide accordingly? I fear that the answer is "No one". I do not know who once described conservatism as an ideology that does not recognise the past and therefore makes no provision for the future, but nowhere is that clearer than in the story of London since the spiteful politicisation of its activities and the abolition of its London-wide authorities.

I cannot fail to mention the Inner London Education Authority. If anything, its abolition was an act of even greater vandalism, for which the people of inner London will pay a sorry price for many years. When the real price is known, it will be much too late to do anything about it. Conservative Members will be pleased to learn that I do not advocate the return even of an inner Londonwide education authority, because I feel that that has gone for good; none the less, I shall not allow the abolition of ILEA to pass without saying that it was an act of gross betrayal and appalling insensitivity. ILEA's reputation for provision for the under-fives and post-16s was exemplary: in many of its activities, especially post-16 provision, it led the nation, if not the world. The price of its abolition is already coming home to Londoners.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand what my hon. Friend has said about the impossibility of returning to ILEA as it was. Does he agree, however, that there is a crying need for the co-ordination of special education provision throughout inner London? Many special schools have been closed and children with particular needs have lost the facilities that they require. We also need much better co-ordination of education for post-16s. I feel that many young Londoners have been failed by the lack of a co-ordinating body to ensure that there is a decent range of post-16 places.

Mr. Dowd: I agree. I was not suggesting for a moment that we could simply leave the boroughs to go their own way; I was simply saying that, in organisational terms, it would be impossible to recreate ILEA in anything like its old form. Once certain things in this world are broken, they cannot be put together again. Nevertheless, those who

[Mr. Dowd]

broke ILEA should be made to face up to their responsibility, particularly in regard to special needs and post-16s.

Much of ILEA's provision for special needs recognised no borough boundaries; why should it have done so? Yet, on its break-up, some boroughs were left with two or three special units within schools, while others were left with none. There followed the ludicrous spectacle of boroughs being charged to send students to special units in other boroughs simply because they happened to be a few hundred yards—or even a few yards—the wrong side of a line that did not even exist when they were created.

The other day, I asked whether figures were available to show the number of post-16 courses in the London boroughs, compared with the number in the last year of ILEA's existence. The figures did not give the number of courses, but they gave the total number of enrolments.

Since 1990, the figures show a reduction of 10 per cent., from 220,000 down to 200,000 enrolments, at a time when unprecedented numbers of school leavers are taking up post-16 further education places, not because they are choosing freely to do so—although I hope that as many as possible do take them up freely—but because there are no real jobs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow made plain, for them to go to. They are, therefore, going on to further education. I am delighted that they are not rejecting the opportunity.

My point, though, is that at a time when the pressure for further education places has grown to unprecedented proportions, a reduction in the number of further education enrolments in inner London is a matter for remark. There has been a huge drop in the number of mature people taking up non-vocational courses. Their lives were greatly enriched by that provision, but now it is denied to them. Many of the real effects of the abolition of ILEA are hard to determine and quantify. None the less, they are real. A tangible decline in the number of opportunities available to Londoners is leading to a substantial deterioration in the quality of their lives.

Nowhere is the lack of co-ordination across London more plain than in the case of transport. I can do no better than quote what was said last December by the CBI's regional task force:

> "Traffic congestion costs businesses £10 billion a year. A single body, working with Government Departments, would be able to co-ordinate the efforts of no fewer than 60 organisations at present responsible for transport in London."

There is little or nothing to add to that. Traffic chaos in London is a fearful burden and a great impediment to getting London moving again, in more ways than one, and attracting the investment that we need to make up for the shortfall in job opportunities that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow so clearly outlined when he introduced the debate.

My hon. Friend also referred to bus deregulation. I draw his attention to an article that quoted the managing director of the east London subsidiary, based in Walthamstow, of London Buses Ltd. He estimates that a quarter of the mileage currently operated by London Buses will be at risk from deregulation. One bus route in four is threatened by deregulation. How on earth can the Conservatives believe that they are doing anything to regenerate London's economy when their wanton, doctrinaire and dogmatic attitude is putting it, on a flimsy pretext, at such risk? It is to everybody's extreme disadvantage.

As for the police authority for London, the drift here is in entirely the opposite direction. Last week, the Home Secretary anounced at the Dispatch Box that he intended to create a Londonwide police authority. Despite any reservations there may be over the precise proportions and the process he will use to select people to serve on that authority, his statement is to be welcomed. I certainly welcome it. Nevertheless, it seems a strange decision. Last evening, I was speaking to my hon. Friends the Members for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), because all three of us, a decade or so ago, were involved in matters relating to policing in London. In the early 1980s, one of our principal demands was for a police authority, other than the Home Secretary, for London. The three of us, and many others, were treated like subversives—we were in the pay of the KGB and various other organisations. We were a danger to civilised society. We were called harmful radicals. It is amazing: we have not changed at all. *[Interruption.]* I apologise to the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) for waking him up. We have continued to argue persuasively, rationally and reasonably and the Home Secretary has now come to the very same conclusion. I am delighted about that, but I shall want to see precisely what is in the small print concerning the police authority for London.

The London ambulance service is another story. In a debate later tonight, for which I hope hon. Members will stay, there will no doubt be a litany of incompetence, management failure, insensitivity and extremely bad service for the people of London. It was announced yesterday that the London ambulance board is to be replaced with a sub-committee of the South West Thames regional health authority, which is itself at least as culpable in respect of the failures of the London ambulance service. This is a furious, almost frantic, slashing around in the dark in an effort to find an answer when the reality is staring people in the face. What is needed is a Londonwide regional health authority to take control and do the planning.

London is a great city with great potential, not just for its citizens but for the nation. It is an asset being wantony and flagrantly squandered. We in the Opposition look forward to its earliest possible regeneration and to the restoration of a citywide authority—something that the people of London have a right to expect.

10.21 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I welcome the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) as it deals with the area inhabited by the greatest mass of population of this country. It deals with the impact of the Government's policies not only on people in this great, historic capital, but also on people in the area of south-east England outside Greater London—an area in which more than 10·5 million people live, and where more than 5 million of them pay income tax. Since September 1959, the area has lost 157,000 manufacturing jobs. The level of unemployment in the south-east, outside Greater London, is costing the country a colossal £4·3 billion each year. There are more than 140,000 long-term unemployed, and, tragically, 163,000 young people, between 16 and 24, are either on the

dole or ought to be receiving some other form of benefit because they are unemployed. It is a serious charge that the Government are indifferent to the plight of young people who are denied the opportunity of friends at work, job satisfaction and creativity. To complete the picture, I should point out that, in the south-east, there are 25 people seeking every job vacancy. That is hardly surprising as, in the past year, the region had about 23,000 business failures.

It is disgraceful that the attendance of Conservative Members representing the counties around London is so poor. Unhappily, on 9 April 1992 I became not just the only Labour MP but the only Opposition MP for many of the counties outside Greater London. Therefore, as well as speaking up for my constituents in Thurrock, which I am proud to do, and on whose behalf I shall outline the effects of the Government's policies and indifference, I can also legitimately claim to speak for not thousands but millions of people outside Greater London who oppose the Government and who are not otherwise represented in this debate.

If some hon. Members balk at that idea, I ask them to note that there is not a single Conservative Back Bencher from Essex here tonight; there is not a single Conservative Back Bencher from Surrey; there is not a single Conservative Back Bencher from West Sussex or East Sussex; there is not a single Conservative Back Bencher from Berkshire or Hampshire, even though hundreds of thousands of people are unemployed in those counties. Thousands are languishing on hospital waiting lists, thousands are homeless and many families are threatened with the loss of their home. Despite that, not one Conservative Back-Bench Member is here to defend the Government's policies, let alone represent those people for whose plight the Government are responsible.

It is a great shame that those people have been let down in that way, especially when one bears in mind that the south-east of England was what could have been called Thatcher country. It unquestionably contributed significantly to Conservative victory after Conservative victory, but its people have been betrayed tonight because they are not represented in a debate on the impact of Government policies on the people of London and south-east England. The people of Thurrock have been battered and bruised by Government policies. Some of what I have to say relates also to the thousands, if not millions, of people in the south-east outside Greater London.

I am pleased to see the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), here tonight. Although he is a courteous man and has extended the hand of friendship to me, I have to say that my constituents feel bitterly disappointed about his recent decision not to permit a public inquiry into what is known as the Aveley No. 3 pit. It is in an area where the residents close to the western boundary of Essex and Greater London will have to endure 17 years of constant tipping of rubbish, extraction and lorry movements. That will be to their great disadvantage and may also jeopardise their health. It is a matter of great concern to many of my constituents and people in the neighbouring London borough, but it is also indicative of what has happened elsewhere in my constituency.

If one were to go up in a helicopter or an aeroplane and look down on my constituency, it would look like a moonscape. For decades, it has been exploited by people with a rapacious appetite for tipping rubbish or extracting minerals. They have no regard for the long-term effects on the area, for its potential beauty or for the health of residents. We look to the Government to say, "Thus far, and no further." We want them to recognise that rubbish tipping and mineral extraction cause considerable problems, and that Thurrock has had more than its fair share. My constituents are bitterly disappointed that the Minister has so far declined to call a halt to tipping and extraction and to protect the people of Aveley by at least allowing them the opportunity to state their case before an independent public inquiry.

I take this opportunity to ask the Minister again to pause and reflect on the matter. Will he at least give me an undertaking when he replies to the debate to reconsider his decision that my constituents will not have the opportunity of a public inquiry into the Aveley No. 3 pit? Will he assure me that the Government will examine much more critically the problem of mineral extraction and waste tipping that bedevils many people in Thurrock and throughout the south-east region and many hon. Members on both sides of the House, and insist on a vigorous application of environmental impact assessments before permissions are given?

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. Mackinlay: I will give way to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), because I know that he has a particular and legitimate interest in the subject.

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way; he knows that my constituency suffers from similar problems. However, he is being a little unfair to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. My hon. Friend understands what we have to put up with, which is why he has recently published new minerals planning guidance which recognises the problems and seeks alternative sources of supply for minerals.

Mr. Mackinlay: The hon. Gentleman's constituents will take note of his defence of the Government's policy. What has been done is too little too late, certainly for my constituents and, I would have thought, for his, too. I hope that the Minister will reflect on the matter and at least be prepared to take the subject away with him for further thought later tonight.

I shall move on to the next subject. My part of Essex is very much part of commuter country, and the people who live there are suffering from a clapped-out railway system, with high fares and an irregular service, which is threatened with franchising. My constituents want not a franchised railway but one which works and which provides them with a reliable service to take them to their places of employment in London. That will not be provided by a franchising operation. Prospective franchisers will be frightened off by the need to invest both in rolling stock and in the infrastructure. There are two possible scenarios. One is that the railway operation will be flogged off as a clapped-out system and will continue as such—a private monopoly under which commuters continue to be ripped off. The second is that no prospective franchisers will come forward.

The Government cannot escape from the fact that major public investment is needed in the London-Tilbury-Southend line. I hope that that idea will be taken on board.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The hon. Gentleman talks about the need for increased investment

[Mr. John Marshall]

and implies that privatisation will not help the railway industry. Is he not aware that there has been a massive increase in investment in every industry that has been privatised? If he wants extra investment in the railways he should vote for the Railways Bill.

Mr. Mackinlay: I do not accept that. But it is true that where industries have been privatised there have been major increases in unemployment. That fact leads me to the subject of the West Thurrock power station, where yesterday the staff were told, without notice, that generation of power was to cease at 10 o'clock last night. More than 350 people face unemployment as a result, and that is in addition to the already high levels of unemployment in my constituency, in Essex as a whole and in east London.

Those people are losing their jobs as a direct consequence of privatisation. The Government refuse to adopt a co-ordinated and comprehensive energy policy that would bring together all the agencies that generate power and ensure that energy was produced effectively and cheaply while maximising the use of existing resources and plant. Instead, because the open market is competitive and unplanned, they permit electricity to be imported from France and allow the unplanned growth of new generating plant, while the recession caused by their economic policies has meant that there has been no increase in the demand for electricity. My constituents are facing the dole queue as a direct consequence of a combination of the Government's policies on energy, their policies that have caused the recession, and their privatisation programme. That is my response to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who defends the privatisation of power, transport and many other important industries.

What has been the Government's response to all this unemployment? Last week, we had the publication of the glossy document containing the Government's proposals on the east Thames corridor which had been much heralded. I recognise the employment potential of the river Thames and its related areas in Kent, Essex and London. There is great potential for regeneration, creating employment, and providing mobility and forms of transport, as well as opportunities for recreation. But once we get beyond the glossy covers, there is no substance.

The document talks about regeneration and creating employment, but does not say how. There is only one way to achieve regeneration and that is by a major programme of public expenditure in the key areas of health, housing and education, and the refurbishment of our clapped-out railway system, but the Government decline to do that. So there is no substance to the document. It is a smokescreen for inaction to try to cover their embarrassment about the acute unemployment in Kent and Essex.

There has been talk about homes, and I want homes for families to live in. The problem in the so-called east Thames corridor is not that there is no land to build on, but that there are no customers. There are acres and acres of land with planning permissions for residential development, but, because of the collapse of confidence in the country, people cannot contemplate buying homes. In addition, the Government refuse to allow councils to build housing estates in which families could rent houses. In my constituency, there are thousands upon thousands of planning permissions, but there are no customers.

Throughout the region and not just in my constituency there is acute depression. It is a new feature of the south-east. Hitherto, it has been an area of relative wealth, abundance and full employment, but in the latter years of the Thatcher premiership and under the stewardship of the present Prime Minister we have seen it go into decline, with high unemployment as well as a tragic number of business failures, which are increments of family grief and anxiety.

I speak for, and am angry on behalf of, those people who invested their lives in small businesses, with the prospect of being able to nurture them and hand them on to their children, only to see them fail, not because of their recklessness or lack of business acumen, but because of the failures and indifference of the Government. What a tragedy! Yet Ministers come here pretending that they are the people who defend and speak for small businesses. They have failed them. People have lost their livelihoods and homes as a consequence, and many others have lost their jobs through the failures and the reduction in demand in key industries.

In January, we had unprecedented levels of unemployment in Essex and Kent. A couple of weeks ago Members on the Government Benches were full of glee because somehow there had been a small reduction in the total unemployment figures in the region. However on that occasion unemployment increased in Surrey and in Berkshire. There was a small drop in the other counties which had already reached high levels in January and in many marginal seats which the Government were delighted to have captured at the polls just a year ago.

In an earlier debate the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) spoke at great length. I dropped him a note to say that I would be referring to him, because of the nature of his speech this evening and those that he has made on other occasions. He boasted that his victory a year ago was of great significance. I guess that is a matter of historical fact. Clearly, the Conservative win in Basildon is written into the history books. Therefore, it becomes a shibboleth and totem of what the Conservatives achieved that night. They cannot be surprised if they are subsequently shot down and indicted for all that Basildon represents and the fact that the people of Basildon now feel bitterly betrayed.

At a time when the hon. Member for Basildon is claiming that there was also a small reduction in unemployment in his constituency, there was an unprecedented council election victory for Labour in Basildon in which David Kirkman won with a 24 per cent. swing to Labour. Indeed, David Kirkman has a higher majority than the hon. Member for Basildon has in the House. This evening in my constituency, the Labour council candidate, John Kent, took 60 per cent. of the poll in a three-corner contest in Grays.

The people of Essex have had enough of this Government. They feel that they have been betrayed by the consequences of electing a Conservative Government. I see it each week in my constituency surgery as, perhaps, do other hon. Members, especially in the south-east of England. There a large number of people were encouraged to purchase their homes and seek the best for their families. I applaud that, as someone who also aspired to that for his family. But in my surgery I see people who are heartbroken, distressed and do not know where to go. They come into our constituency surgeries each week because they have lost their jobs and, as a consequence, are losing their homes. Such families are not reckless. They are

husbands and wives with delightful children and they want to provide the best for their families. However, they find that their homes have gone, not through their fault but through the Government's failure to provide the opportunity and security which come from being in employment.

One could continue at great length with indictments against the Government. Conservative Members mutter because—to use the words of Corporal Jones in "Dad's Army"—

"They don't like it up 'em".

I suspect that they will get more of it from my colleagues this evening because almost all of the Government's programmes have failed the British people and particularly the people of this region.

I can illustrate the matter in another way. The Secretary of State for National Heritage has failed this region and London—which is a major tourist area, in which we earn dollars and an area to which we can invite people from overseas—by his neglect of, and indifference to, the fabric of so many of our great monuments and historic sites. If I had lived at the time of the good Prince Albert, the consort of Queen Victoria, I might not have been among his greatest fans, but is not it ridiculous and absurd that, in a major tourist part of London, the Albert memorial is covered up? Apparently it is covered in scaffolding and is rotting because the Government will not ensure that the memorial is protected. The Albert memorial is located in an area which crawls with people from north America who come here to enjoy the beauty of London and spend their dollars. However, this major monument is not so much in mothballs but is rotting because the Secretary of State for National Heritage cannot or will not find the money for it.

In the past 24 hours, I have received a letter which was prompted by the Secretary of State—presumably, he does not read the letters which his underlings write to hon. Members—in which the Master of the Armouries at the Tower of London says that he would have liked to make improvements in terms of fire precautions and safety,

"but lack of funds has so far made"—

it—

"impossible".

He refers specifically to

"the installation of full automatic fire detection and suppression throughout the museum".

He tries to reassure me, but does not, that

"This . . . is an area of improvement which we have seen as necessary to protect the buildings and our collections rather than the visiting public, for in a fully staffed building like the White Tower any danger is soon seen by staff and appropriate measures taken to safeguard the public."

The great historic Tower of London, a symbol of our national independence, is vulnerable to fire. I am not satisfied that the thousands upon thousands of visitors who go there are safe, particularly when the management is reducing the number of staff and Yeoman warders at that great historic site.

The last matter with which I wish to deal is the health of my area. Just this evening, I have been informed by the Basildon and Thurrock hospital trust that it will have to make redundant a large number of non-clinical employees. That is not because the trust has been dilatory. It has not. It is not because it has not fulfilled its obligations. It has. It has worked hard to fulfil its contracts. The trouble is that the crazy system of funding the national health service which the Government have introduced means that the health authority does not have the funds to buy the operations which the trust can provide. The money is not there.

Yet in my area there are large pockets of great poverty and consequential poor health. The accident and emergency department at Orsett hospital in Thurrock was closed due to the Government's indifference to the representations of thousands upon thousands of people from Thurrock and, indeed, Basildon.

I keep returning to the theme that people not only in my constituency but in south-east England outside Greater London seem to have fallen off the table of the Government's consideration. I believe that that is because I am the only Opposition Member for the area and the other seats are deemed to be safe Conservative seats. However, I believe that times are changing. It is interesting that so few Tory Members have attended the debate tonight. Apart from the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), at this moment there is not one Conservative Back-Bencher in the Chamber.

I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Dover is here, because he represents a marginal seat. His constituency will probably suffer from the construction of the channel tunnel route. There will be acute depression in some areas of his constituency of Dover and in other areas such as Thanet because there will be a gravitational pull of industry and wealth along the corridor of the channel tunnel route. That will jeopardise much of his constituency. So the mind of the hon. Member for Dover has been concentrated on the need to defend his position and his Government's policies in the period running up to the general election.

But let us give the hon. Member for Dover full marks. He is here tonight. Where are the other hundreds of Conservative Members of Parliament? They are not here. I hope that if one message comes through tonight, it will be that when the House of Commons had the opportunity to debate unemployment, health, transport, homelessness and housing, no Conservative Members of Parliament were present from the counties of Surrey, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Essex, East Sussex, West Sussex or Hampshire. That is the greatest indictment of Conservative Members. I hope that their constituents will remember it when we have an opportunity to call them to account at the poll.

10.48 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): This debate is about Government policies and their effect on London and the south-east. It gives me a great sense of déjà vu to follow the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). He and I last debated together some 18 years back in the council chamber of Kingston upon Thames. I could not accept his views then and I am afraid that I cannot do so now. But I have always enjoyed his conversation, especially afterwards.

The economy of Dover is much tied up with the economy and well-being of London and the south-east. The Romans landed in Dover well before they came up to see this area of London, which was eventually developed in many respects by the Romans. The Romans were unable to land directly in Dover; we repulsed them, and they were forced to go up the beach to the delightful area in my constituency known as Walmer, where they finally managed to get ashore. The reason why I mention the Romans is that one of the big concerns in my constituency is the road linkage to London, and the A2 road, among others. Indeed, the Old Kent road has a very significant meaning for my constituents.

The Minister knows well the details of my constituency; he has recently visited it and taken a great interest in one particular problem. I know that the nuns of Kearsney are very grateful to him for the considerable support and assistance that he has given them in ensuring that there has been water in the lake at Kearsney recently. His interest in that matter has certainly been very welcome indeed.

The ferries of Dover are well known to many hon. Members and many of them would perhaps accuse me of raising the concerns of those who work in our ferry industry overmuch, but they will understand that for me those concerns can never be raised too much in the House. The ferries of Dover take many millions of Londoners and residents of the south-east on holiday every year. The many transport links to Dover, the road links, are fundamental and important in helping Londoners and residents of the south-east going on those trips and holidays abroad. This debate, therefore, is in my view very important to the interests of Dover.

Many of us who have sat through recent debates on the coal industry and other issues affecting other areas of the country sometimes get the feeling that the House does not discuss the needs of London and the south-east enough. Far too much attention is directed to the needs of certain other areas of the country which have had historically important positions in the economy but may not have kept their own industries and businesses up to date with the latest technology and developments. In consequence, they are undergoing change processes which affect them very deeply, but at the same time attract far more attention than one sometimes feels that they deserve. This detracts from the attention that should sometimes be given, I believe, to the problems that places such as Dover and Deal and other areas of the south-east face.

We all face process of change, especially during a recession, because recession heightens the need within the economy for old industries to give way to the new businesses and new technology which will develop the job opportunities of the following decade. I feel that much is going on in the south-east at present which indicates that this process of change is now accelerating. We are coming out of recession and we shall be seeing considerable development in the future, and it may well be that the Government can assist in that development in various ways.

Certainly, one way in which the Government can assist is by not going down the route that Labour was offering us at the last general election, because Labour's policies would have been disastrous. It was not difficult for me to point out to my constituents that raising income tax to the level to which Labour wanted to raise it for people earning £21,000 a year or more would hit not only 50 per cent. or thereabouts of people who work on Dover's ferries but, more importantly, 50 per cent. or thereabouts of the people who use Dover's ferry industry. That would have been a fundamental disaster for Dover's No. 1 industry.

Mr. Tony Banks: In this period of honest addressing of the facts in his own constituency, at the last general election, did the hon. Gentleman suggest that a Conservative Government might increase national insurance contributions by 1 per cent., which is the same as putting up income tax by 1p in the pound, or put 17·5 per cent. value added tax on domestic fuel?

Mr. Shaw: One of the commitments that I gave in the general election was that we would ensure that the national insurance fund, which is fundamental in looking after the nation's pensions, would be properly funded. I do not subscribe to the view that one should rush around increasing national insurance and I was very much against the Labour Government when they increased it, but given that we should fund our state pensions, it is appropriate for national insurance to be increased. My constituents will see that the decisions in the Budget are entirely consistent with any election literature that I put out. I said that we would lower income tax and move towards a 20 per cent. rate and we have done that.

Especially after the Rio summit, I never said that we would not put VAT on energy. Hon. Members will know that it is not practical to go to a summit in Rio de Janeiro and give a commitment to all the countries in the rest of the world that we shall work to reduce greenhouse gases and then not take steps to deliver on that commitment. Everyone in the House who is at all honest will recognise that we have to do something to affect the price of energy so that people will be encouraged to conserve it. That is consistent with all the material that I put out in the election campaign.

Mr. Corbyn: I did not want to interrupt the hon. Gentleman on national insurance, but if I can take him back to the situation in his constituency, what message can he give the people of Deal, particularly the large number of unemployed miners who worked extremely hard in the remaining coalfields in Kent until 1985-86 when the Government that he supports closed down the remaining Kent coalfield, brutally, in my view? We have now lost those skills and productive capacity and there is great unhappiness and misery among those who formerly worked in that industry.

Mr. Shaw: In 1985-86 I was not a Member of Parliament, so I was not in a position to take an active role in supporting the coalfields that were closed prior to my election. I was elected in 1987 and one coalfield was closed after that. I spent considerable time trying to establish

whether there was any way in which it could be kept open. I was on the phone to the chairman of British Coal and liaised closely with a number of miners—people of a different political persuasion from myself, perhaps of a more extreme political persuasion. I tried to act in their best interests to find an opportunity for a buy-out or some other way to keep that pit open.

One of the problems in my discussions with the chairman of British Coal was the attitude of a small group of miners who were in control of the trade union. They were so negative in their relationship with British Coal that I could not get British Coal or its chairman to the point at which we could effect sensible negotiations. Although the attitude of British Coal was not ideal in the circumstances, after the violence of the coal strike of 1984 I could not help but understand why the attitude of the National Union of Mineworkers and those in my constituency who had sided with Arthur Scargill at the time resulted in the closure of the pit.

I would have welcomed an opportunity for the pit to remain open, but the trade union was more Sheffield-orientated in its obedience to the NUM than many other pro-Scargill parts of the union. The blind attitude towards the standard policy of the NUM was outrageous. That is why, sadly, production in the Betteshanger colliery never achieved an economically viable level. I saw British Coal's investment programme for Betteshanger. It could have remained open until recently, even in the present situation, had it achieved the production levels that British Coal and I wanted. I still see many of those miners, and I believe that they were let down by a small group of trade union officials' slavish obedience to Sheffield.

Labour's policies and attitudes would have a disastrous impact on my constituency. Those attitudes, even when they are displayed by those in opposition, are sometimes extremely damaging because they encourage people to think that there are alternative ways in which to obtain jobs other than through the private sector. They encourage people to think that there are other ways in which to create successful businesses other than through existing businesses which create profits.

Many people still write to me saying, "Isn't profit a dirty word?" Even after 14 years of Conservative Government, some people do not understand that if there are no profits, one does not attract more investment, and that without that investment, one does not create jobs. People go on about the high salaries of managers and the profits earned, but they do not realise that they are taxed and that that tax revenue helps the economy. They do not realise that those factors attract people to bring their businesses here. Tremendous opportunities are often lost because people worry about what might happen if Labour party attitudes became more influential—the party need not be in government—because they believe that they are wrong and do not help business development.

Those concerns may explain why we only attract 50 per cent. of inward investment to Europe from around the world. I should not say "only" 50 per cent. when the remaining countries of the European Community attract the other 50 per cent. between them. The investment that we attract represents a major vote of confidence in the Government. I have no doubt that if the Labour party were in power we would not receive such a vote from abroad.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I are members of the Council of the Europe. On Monday we attended a meeting of the Social and Health Committee in Brussels and were given a presentation on social dumping—the hon. Gentleman will know what I mean by that. The hon. Gentleman may speak about foreign confidence in the United Kingdom, but other members of the Council did not express confidence in the policy of social dumping, now encouraged by his Government, which operates at the expense of workers in other European countries. He should meet some of his political colleagues in Europe and learn at first hand about that problem.

Mr. Shaw: If the hon. Gentleman told Sony, Toyota and Nissan that their plants in Wales, Derbyshire and Washington represented social dumping they would be deeply offended and would say, "If you don't want our investment and jobs, we'll go home." That is not the attitude of the Conservative Government, thank goodness. The Government have been successful in attracting good jobs which offer good wages and opportunities. If the hon. Gentleman is worried about what might be called social dumping, he should be concerned about low wages. We are trying to become a high-wage economy, but that cannot be achieved with the dinosaur-like attitudes of the Labour party and the trade unions to industries in the past.

If we listened to Labour party attitudes and statements we would think that we were trying to preserve the candle industry or the horse-drawn carriage industry. My constituency had to suffer in 1846 when the horse-drawn carriage industry went out of business overnight because of the railway. With the introduction of the railway, many people lost their jobs in my constituency. The same was true with the introduction of iron and steel ships, when all the repairers of wooden ships lost their jobs. The Labour party would be trying to keep wooden ships, the horse-drawn carriage trade and the horses.

There are better jobs to be had among the more efficient, technical jobs of the future. We must go forward with new technology and better jobs for the future. As the Government continue in office—I hope, for many more years—I hope that they will bring in more international investment as it often brings good ideas. Sadly, those ideas are not always developed here because we cannot always develop every idea in the world. However, we still win many more Nobel prizes than most countries per thousand of population. As we cannot develop every idea, we have to continue to attract a lot of outside investment.

The Labour party has negative attitudes to profit and business—the latest Trades Union Congress document contains no reference to profits. Such attitudes mean that we are not having an important political debate in this country. On the Floor of the House of Commons we should have debates about which side can produce better profits for British industry, which side can produce higher added value and, in consequence, higher wages, better standards of living and more taxes paid on the profits to provide a better financed health service and education system, and all the advantages that come with high profitability in business and industry.

All that we hear from the Labour party is talk of more and more regulations on business and industry. One Labour Member has just spoken of more authorities, the need to set up more bodies and another Greater London

[Mr. Shaw]

body to mimic the Greater London council. Those of us who have to live in London during the week have been far better off without a GLC and all the interference.

I served on a borough council with the hon. Member for Thurrock, who must surely remember the constant referral to the GLC that we had to have from Kingston about planning issues. There was constant interference from the GLC. If the hon. Gentleman is honest, he must surely remember that it was nothing but a nuisance constantly to have to refer issues from Kingston to the GLC.

Mr. Gerrard: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's comments about the number of bodies that the Labour party want to create. How many organisations did the Conservative Government create to replace the one organisation that used to exist in London, the GLC? How many quangos now exist to do the job that that one body used to do?

Mr. Shaw: Sometimes it is not the number of organisations that is important, but the powers and staff that they are given to interfere in other people's lives. An organisation which consists primarily of volunteers acting in an advisory capacity is totally different from a Greater London council with 30,000 staff which was constantly interfering in our decision-making processes. When I was a member of Kingston council, it was unable to make many important decisions without having the Greater London council interfering in the way we operated.

Mr. Mackinlay: A Conservative Government created the Greater London council. When things were going well for them, they were pleased to gain control of the council. When they lost control, they did not like the fact that it provided checks and balances against their excessive power here at Westminster. The council was destroyed because the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, did not like anybody challenging her authority—for no other reason.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman is deliberately trying to shorten history. As I recall, what happened was that we had the London county council. Under Labour, that body was totally corrupt, and tried to build the Conservatives out of London.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to announce that the former LCC was totally corrupt without specifying what form that corruption took, who benefited from it, or anything else? It seems to me that a blanket assertion like that is not in order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): It is in order.

Mr. Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the real test of the efficiency of local government in London since the abolition of the GLC is the number of people employed by local authority bodies such as the London residuary body? Has there not been a substantial reduction in the number of people employed in local government in London? Furthermore, has not the LRB raised a great deal of money, to the benefit of all Londoners, by selling off surplus assets?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend, who knows a great deal about London, is right. In answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) let me say that I was coming on to make the point that the reason why the LCC was corrupt was that one of its major policy aims was to build the Conservatives out of London. Many of the social and crime problems of London are the result of LCC housing estates, many of them strategically built in the attempt to do that. That has backfired on the Labour party, because now each boundary commission change gives more seats to the Conservatives outside London because more and more Conservative-thinking people have had enough of certain areas and have moved out to the shire counties.

When one looks at Labour-run councils such as Lambeth, Haringey and Hackney, which waste money and have corrupt practices, one has to recognise that the cycle of corruption will have to be stopped soon, in the interests of the British people. Many of those councils are over-employing because they have to appease the trade unions which elect the councillors at the Labour party branch meetings. Until we can break that cycle, we shall not have proper and democratic local government. There is a particular problem in London and the south-east where Government policy must be ever more forceful, alert and aware of the problems.

My constituency is concerned about transport and transport arrangements. Those are fundamental, given the position of Dover and Deal in relation to the south-east and access to it. We are grateful to the Government for the A20 road link that is being built. We are concerned about the delays, and I am grateful to the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who has made sure that many of my constituents, especially those running businesses which have suffered, will receive compensation. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will convey my thanks, and my concern that, among his Easter recess enjoyments, the Minister will look into his red box to see the difficulty that the road construction is still creating for certain of my constituents, so that their businesses can be saved from bankruptcy. I know that he is taking an active interest, but I should like to place on record the concerns of my constituents that that should be looked at, even during the Easter recess.

I am also grateful for the fact that the former Secretary of State for Transport, now in the House of Lords—Lord Parkinson—agreed to the dualling of the A2 between Dover and Lydden, which will be of immense benefit to people in the south-east who want to communicate with the continent via Dover. The reality, however, is that the planning stages in the dualling of the A2 are taking a long time. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minster will take note of that and ensure that the Department of Transport will do everything possible to quicken the process of planning the road improvements between Dover and Lydden, which are important for my constituents.

I cannot give the Government full marks, sadly, when assessing the way in which British Rail is operating, especially in terms of rolling stock. Primarily it is a British Rail problem, however, and not a Government one. The Government have given British Rail massive investment moneys. Large sums have been directed to BR's external financing limit to enable it to undertake a considerable investment programme. Unfortunately, a large part of that programme is related to channel tunnel rolling stock. British Rail seems to be under the impression that it can continue spending on lots of lovely rolling stock for the

channel tunnel and without providing a decent amount of new rolling stock on the south Kent coastal route. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will draw the attention of Department of Transport Ministers to the continued failure of BR to produce a sensible programme for introducing new rolling stock on the coastal route.

The Government, with the Opposition's full support, have implemented the construction of the channel tunnel —obviously through the private sector, but with the full approval of the House in terms of legislation. The tunnel, combined with the single European market changes, will have a considerable effect on the number of jobs available in my constituency. Unemployment will result from these changes. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take on board that sometimes far too much attention is focused on coal mining and other areas when changes are taking place elsewhere as a result of Government and international policies which reduce job opportunities. The effects of the channel tunnel and the single European market need to be considered carefully by the Government.

We shall face many changes in Dover. We can face them and handle the implications; we are not burying our heads in the sand. Much planning has been undertaken by the Conservative-run Dover district council in an extremely sensible way, but we may need some Government assistance. We are not making as great a fuss as some areas. We take the view that that is not necessary on the basis that a sensible, well put together argument presented rationally will be listened to by the Government. I hope that my hon. Friend will draw to the attention of Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry who are examining assisted area status the need for some form of assistance for Dover and Deal to enable the area to tackle the problems which lie ahead.

The designation of assisted area status is not always the best way of helping an area. I subscribe to the view that enterprise zone status offers many opportunities. I have been told that there is a ridiculous European Community-inspired principle that an area cannot have enterprise zone status without first having assisted area status. I hope that that advice is wrong, but I fear that, sadly, it is true. That bureaucratic principle may stop Dover and Deal from securing the ideal status—enterprise zone status—which would bring more assistance and benefit to my constituency.

We should like to develop an industrial park at Whitfield. The council has the land organised and there is the opportunity to go ahead. Dover's harbour board is up front in trying to get a development programme in place for the Wellington and Western docks. I pay tribute to the management team and others who have been involved in putting the plan together. There is a tremendous opportunity for Dover, and with the right roads we can move forward. We need some form of Government assistance to ensure that the various projects can come to fruition. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm tonight that the Government will give Dover as much assistance as is reasonable, and a fair share of assistance relative to other areas of the country.

I know that the Government will help London, the south-east, Dover and Deal, and east Kent far more than any Labour Government would. A Labour Government's priorities would be elsewhere. A Labour Government's agenda would be elsewhere—and a Labour agenda always costs the country dear. It would be far more expensive for my constituents than any other. I want a Conservative Government with lots of energy and enthusiasm to help to tackle the problems of the south-east and to help us move forward to the year 2000 with confidence. I know that a Conservative Government will do that.

11.20 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Driving to the House this evening, I travelled along St. Pancras way, in the borough of Camden, just north of King's Cross and St. Pancras stations. I saw one of London's normal sights—a group of 50 people carrying plastic bags, waiting alongside dustbins and rubbish piled up against the wall for the night shelter hostel to open. It opens each night at about 10 o'clock. The homeless can get a roof over their head and a bed for the night, and in the morning they must leave again—and spend another day tramping the streets of London.

Last night I attended a moving gathering at Islington town hall organised by a youth group called Speak Out for the Homeless. It was not a traditional public meeting, with a series of speeches by councillors, housing pressure group members, Members of Parliament, and so on. Most of the evening was taken up with young homeless people telling the story of their lives on the streets of London.

They included young women who had grown up in children's homes, and received inadequate community care at the time of leaving the home. They then found themselves in inadequate accommodation, involved in drugs and prostitution, and suffered all manner of violence against them. They ended up drugged, wasted and destroyed, hanging around Piccadilly circus and the streets of this capital city. They have got out of that, to the extent that they now enjoy some form of regular shelter and are at least able to tell the rest of us about their experiences.

It is a question not of solving housing problems in London but of witnessing a steady decline in housing standards. We are seeing young people's lives blighted by the shortage of affordable rented accommodation. We are witnessing the misery of young children suffering from chronic asthma or bronchitis living in damp, dirty, overcrowded flats that the council does not have the money to repair—and no other flats to which it can move such families.

We are seeing at the same time, still, the endless, speculative building of office blocks all over the capital, which remain empty. That is a shame, it is disgusting, and it is appalling. Responsibility for it lies fairly, squarely and totally with central Government's attitude towards the capital's housing needs.

I represent an inner-city constituency, as do a number of my hon. Friends. Our communities live for the most part in council accommodation. I am not particularly proud of the quality of much of it. It was built according to nonsensical, cost yardstick methods and too quickly, and inadequate thought was given to open space and nursery provision.

It is impossible for anyone to escape from tower block or deck access flats—there is simply nowhere to go. The idea that the Government are solving the problem is a hollow laugh. They produced a number of rough sleepers initiatives, which were introduced not out of any deep concern for the problems of London's homeless but to get them off the streets and into night shelters—to get them out of sight and out of mind.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

It is no life for people to live permanently in shelters and hostels; it is no life for 18,000 to live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. What can, must and, I hope, eventually will solve London's housing crisis is real investment by the public sector to ensure the provision of social housing, at affordable rents, for all the people of London, so that they have decent, safe, dry roofs over their heads. If anything less is provided, the city will continue to decline.

The knock-on effects of bad housing are family break-ups, under-achievement in schools, crime, unemployment and a great deal of misery. Last night, there was a repeat showing on television of "Cathy Come Home". That woman's prospect of finding a house all those years ago was much greater than it would be now. The film was moving in the 1960s, when it first came out; it is a crying shame that the present situation in London is not better, but worse than it was when that marvellous film was made. It is about time that the Government woke up to the misery that they are causing thousands, if not millions, of people in this capital city—and, indeed, outside it—through the shortage of decent, affordable housing.

The solution lies in the Government's hands. It does not lie in their constant attacks on local authorities. My authority, for example, has had to sell 5,000 homes in the past five years. It did not want to sell any of those homes: it knows that each sale means the removal of a home that could have been allocated to someone on the waiting list, or to a homeless family. But it had to sell them. It will not build any homes this year. Some housing associations, after a great deal of effort, will manage to build a very small number of places; our waiting list, like that of every other London borough, is constantly lengthening, and the only people with a chance of being housed are the homeless—provided that they are vulnerable and have dependent children. The single homeless lose out completely because of the lack of a proper housing strategy for London.

I shall give the Minister plenty of time to reply. I hope that he will tell us precisely what the Government are doing to solve London's housing crisis, and that he will not tell us that the private sector is to let rip. Letting rip in the private sector has led to private-sector rents of as much as £150 a week for a one-bedroom flat in my constituency. That is way beyond the means of anyone receiving the normal low wages that—tragically—exist throughout London. I do not want the Minister to tell me that the private sector will invest in affordable rented accommodation; that simply is not credible. The only answer is a serious attempt to invest on the part of public authorities with public funds.

Some years ago, we had an elected authority for London. We had a Greater London council; before that, we had a London county council. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) seems to think that the London county council tried to destroy the Tory party in London by building decent houses. If the Tory party in London is afraid of decent houses, good: I am very glad. That exposes what their argument is about. The London county council's quality of construction was incredibly high. I am thinking of the Downham estate, the Debden estate and many other London estates, which were built to a very high standard. Later, building mistakes were made by every local authority, Tory and Labour, by the GLC and by other metropolitan authorities. We embarked on system building of high-rise developments far too rapidly—perhaps, indeed, we should not have embarked on it at all—with all the attendant social problems.

Exactly the same problems are being created now by the Department of the Environment's attitude to cost yardsticks and the density of public-sector building. It is about time that we began to realise that if we want decent homes with gardens for ourselves, it is reasonable for everyone else to want the same. Such homes should be available from councils and housing associations just as easily as they are available on the open market in the private sector.

I shall mention one or two other matters, but I think that housing problems are among the most serious, pervasive and destructive currently experienced by the people of London. We need a crash initiative to deal with the crisis; otherwise, we shall reap the whirlwind later.

Tomorrow, London will be paralysed by traffic jams. There is to be a public transport strike. I understand the reasons why that strike is to take place. I understand why bus workers, who have given a lifetime of loyalty to London Transport, are going on strike—they are being forced to sign documents to reduce their wages, increase their hours and put their jobs out to competitive tendering at some time in the future. They believe in an integrated public transport system, just as the railway workers do. Why should they be forced to sign their own redundancy notices? That, in effect, is what privatisation of the railways and deregulation of the buses will mean.

When people from other parts of this country, or from other countries, visit London they say to me, "Why on earth do you put up with the chaos, the congestion, the pollution, the high fares and the inadequate service in London?" I tell them that it is good, compared with what it is likely to be in three or four years' time. At the moment we still have the vestiges of an integrated public transport system, but by the time the docklands light railway has been sold off, bus franchising has gone full circle, there has been total deregulation of the buses and the railways have been privatised, there will be no possibility of an integrated and decent public transport system in London. When one looks into the minutiae of the Department of Transport's capital spending plans, one begins to see that the logic of it is to transfer yet more journeys in London and the south-east—if not directly in and out of central London—from public transport to private car commuting. That is a disaster for us all.

Another issue to which I wish to refer—the health of Londoners as a whole—is related to the two previous issues. I mentioned the pollution that results from the high level of private car ownership and usage in London and the child and adult health problems that are brought about by poor housing in London. London is not a particularly healthy city to live in. Its air is very polluted and it is very congested. There is a great deal of social and individual tension, brought about by poverty and unemployment. There are 150,000 people waiting for hospital appointments.

Logic tells me that to deal with this problem we should make full use of our existing hospitals and that we should even consider building new hospitals and providing additional health care. The Government propose to spend £170 million on a primary care initiative, which I have no objection to, except that it is far too small and is limited to only six boroughs. By using the long-arm tactic of regional

health authorities, and others, the Government hope to get away with the closure of at least seven hospitals in London, with the loss of a very large number of hospital beds. I cannot understand how losing hospital beds and closing hospitals and casualty units will reduce waiting lists. Logic tells me that it is simply not possible to do it that way.

I hope that the appalling state of London's health services and the need for a London health authority and the planning of health care for London as a whole, rather than being divided between the four Thames health authority regions, will be recognised in the debate. I hope that it will also be recognised that the internal market is incapable of providing proper health care for the people of London, because all that matters to the internal market is the buying and selling of health care between health authorities and particular hospital trusts.

Both I and other Members with constituencies in the area, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), recently had a very interesting meeting at the Whittington hospital. At the end of it, we were appalled to find that our local health authority had yet to sign a contract for this financial year for its patients—our constituents—to be treated by the hospital trust. It is crazy to run a health service in such a way that in March and April of each year there is a panic about whether a contract will be signed so that our constituents can get the health care for which they pay through their insurance and tax contributions.

It would not be right to mention health without also mentioning the ambulance service. Later tonight my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has a debate on the subject. He is to be praised for the work that he has done over many years in exposing the way in which the London ambulance service has been run. He is also to be praised for his work with the unions and those who are employed by the London ambulance service to get a decent ambulance service for London. It was his work and that of the unions, community health councils and others that exposed the nonsensical way in which the London ambulance service was run. Eventually it led to the resignation of the director. Now the entire London ambulance service board has been dismissed. Everything has reverted to the South West Thames regional health authority.

The situation that has arisen in the London ambulance service is chronic, but it is a typical result of the notion that every public service can be run by some quango, that one has only to avoid public-sector control. The London ambulance service was founded by the London county council and was run by that body and, later, by the Greater London council. At that time, there was real public accountability. Here we have an object lesson for our approach to many other aspects of life in London.

This city is in a state of crisis. We have a crisis of housing, a crisis of transport, a crisis of health and a crisis of employment. We have 468,000 people registered as unemployed. Each of them is willing, able and ready to take a job, but the job is not there. Because of the way in which the list of the unemployed is drawn up, many people cannot even have their names put on it. Last year, fewer than a dozen school leavers in my borough went straight into a job. Obviously, some started further or higher education, but very many youngsters who had grown up in the borough, like many from other boroughs, went straight from school to unemployment.

It is an appalling crisis. We have seen the closure of manufacturing industry. There is a lack of planning and a lack of investment, yet there is work to be done in the health service, improvement of the transport infrastructure, the building of homes and the redevelopment of some areas of manufacturing industry. But unless the capital city has a planning authority, and some concept of planning, this simply will not happen. The free market has entirely destroyed the manufacturing base, especially in north and east London. We saw the introduction to the east end and the City of lots of fly-by-night office jobs, which then disappeared. Now we have the nonsense of large numbers of empty office blocks as a testament to a period of lack of planning.

If ever there was a point in the history of a capital city at which chaos had been achieved and further chaos could be avoided, this is one. But to achieve that, we need an elected authority with a mandate to plan and to ensure that Londoners are decently housed and have decent health and education services and that somebody is taking responsibility for, and an interest in, the development of industry. Earlier this week a group of Labour Members stood on the steps of Westminster pier to promote a petition for an elected authority for London. We signed the petition, and it will be signed by thousands more Londoners. They understand the situation. They want to live in a clean, healthy and happy city. That cannot be achieved if the free market is allowed to rip, resulting in the destruction of all that is good in London and in the creation of a mess in which it will not be possible to solve any of the problems.

Seeing how few Members are in the Chamber, I am struck by the thought that the House may not be taking these problems very seriously tonight. None the less, we shall have to deal again and again with the choice between a properly run capital city and the propsect of further chaos and higher crime rates. Such misery is clearly beckoning.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Ms Glenda Jackson. Before the hon. Lady speaks, I must point out that, as she has spoken already, she needs the leave of the House.

11.37 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson: I am most grateful to have the leave of the House to participate in this part of the debate, and I am equally grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) for giving us the opportunity to discuss the Government's policies—or, rather, the lack of Government policy—with regard to Greater London and the south-east.

There is a popular myth that my constituency of Hampstead and Highgate is a leafy suburb populated entirely by millionaires, who drink only champagne and whose only conversational exchange could be deemed to be chatter. I feel that a similar attitude prevails in relation to London as a whole. As all my hon. Friends have pointed out, the reality is very different. Unless perceptions—in particular, the perceptions of the Government—can be shifted, the decline that we have witnessed in the capital since the onset of the present recession could become irreversible.

Another popular myth circulating at present is that we can somehow talk our country, and with it our capital, back to economic health: if we do not criticise or find fault,

[Ms Glenda Jackson]

confidence will return and everything in the garden will be rosy. However, it is precisely that head-in-the-sand attitude which has led to London's dire economic circumstances. Unless we begin to face up to London's problems, we shall never have a hope of overcoming them.

A year ago, I made my maiden speech and referred to the 5,000 of my constituents who were without work. That figure has now topped 6,000, and a recent survey by the Association of London Authorities predicts that, by 1997, more than 7,000 of my constituents will have no job. One ward in my constituency has an unemployment rate of over 20 per cent., and unemployment in Hampstead and Highgate as a whole is worse than the average unemployment rate for any area of the United Kingdom with the exception of Northern Ireland.

Every eight hours, another job is lost in my constituency, but that is not a freak problem specific to my constituency. More than half the unemployment in the country is located in London and the south-east, and London alone has a greater number of unemployed people than Wales and Scotland put together. Indeed, last year London lost a job every seven and a half minutes, and 49 Londoners are now chasing every vacancy. That is the reality of London.

London is a city with major social and economic problems, which are not transient. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow referred to the apathy felt by young people who regard education as pointless because it will not lead to employment. That is confirmed by a case of which I heard from a dedicated worker with a group that attempts to stop drug abuse among young people. He said that he knows young people of 14 and 15 who can earn £1,300 a week selling, pushing and using drugs. He wondered what we had to offer as an alternative. What, indeed, after 14 years of Conservative government, do we have to offer them?

Unemployment in London has become structural. Even if the most optimistic growth estimates for next year and the following year are realised, London will enter the next century with more than half a million people unemployed. London has an economy which is geared to the service sector, yet it has no industrial base to service. It has an economy which is primarily geared to the financial sector, yet a country whose capital is bidding to be the location of the European central bank cannot even maintain an exchange rate comparable with its European partners, and 20 million sq ft of office space in the capital is empty.

London has an economy which depends on being the gateway to Europe, yet, even though its roads are clogged with congestion which costs this country £10 billion a year, investment cannot be found for railways to link the east of the capital to the west or the Jubilee line to Canary Wharf, but £25 billion can be found for widening the M25.

How can we expect the economy of London to grow and to compete when more than 400,000 Londoners are forced to stand idle and when, with the year 2000 beckoning, we cannot provide more than 40,000 London families with a roof over their head which they can call their own?

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to the drama-documentary "Cathy Come Home", which was shown again on Channel 4 last night. It is 30 years since that film was made but Cathy still does not have a home. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) has a theory about reducing crime and social difficulties, problems that he laid at the door of the London county council for building homes. I assume that he endorses the Government's policy of reducing crime and possible social unrest by ensuring that people have no homes in which to live.

Despite there being more than 40,000 homeless families, since September 1990 more than 20,000 construction jobs have been lost in London. Setting aside the human tragedy involved, what are the economic implications of those statistics?

How much does it cost to support homelessness in London? The last estimate that I saw said that it cost £15,000 to keep a family of four in bed and breakfast. How much does it cost to support the 20,000 construction workers who have lost their jobs? It costs £180 million ayear in unemployment benefit alone, and that does not even begin to touch the loss in tax revenues and national insurance. How much does it cost the businesses that rely on the consuming power of those who are now homeless or unemployed, and therefore are no longer consumers?

Few cities can have as much potential as the city of London—and few cities can have seen their potential so comprehensively wasted. London can still be turned round, but to do so will take direction, understanding and commitment. It is farcical that London remains the only capital city on earth that has no central strategic authority.

How can London and Londoners pull together, or have any sense of common purpose, when London is governed by a maze of unelected, unaccountable quangos, joint boards, committees and units, all with their own agendas and ideas of what London wants and needs? How can any economy flourish in an environment where planning and investment decisions must be made against such a chaotic background? Also, what chance is there for London when so many of its problems are so blatantly dismissed or ignored?

At present London is suffering economic hardship as bad as that in any area of the country. Yet because only 17 per cent. of London jobs are now based in the industrial sector London is excluded from European regional development fund assistance. That is why it is essential that when the new assisted areas map is published London does not find itself excluded from domestic aid in the same way as it has been excluded from European assistance. What London requires above all else is commitment. Assisted area help is important, but London needs the long-term investment that will enable it to help itself.

It has been estimated that 150,000 additional local authority and housing association homes are required in London over the next five years. If a programme to tackle that housing deficit were launched today, it could create 26,000 jobs in the first year, rising to over 50,000 jobs by the time the project was completed. Alternatively, if the investment to provide the rail and other transport infrastructure improvements necessary to tackle London's appalling traffic congestion were provided, the rail projects alone would provide 49,000 jobs. That is an unlikely prospect, on the day that the Government have announced that British Rail's public service requirement is to be cut by 23 per cent.—but that is the kind of commitment that London's economy needs.

Attempting to talk London up is an exercise in futility if we continue to allow a lack of investment to run London down. Rome was not built in a day, but Nero saw it burn

in half that time. In the same way, we can either begin the slow, steady process of reversing the decline of our capital, or we can watch it spiral downwards, becoming little more than a curiosity, captured in the lenses and postcards of tourists who could not afford Marine World or wanted a break from Euro-Disney.

I believe that London deserves better than that—certainly Londoners deserve better than that—and that it can indeed be better. If we give London the tools, the people of London will finish the job—and what is, after all, the nation's capital can become a world capital, worthy of the name.

11.48 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall call Mr. John Marshall, but before I do so I point out to him that, although he does not need the leave of the House to speak this time, he has a slot of his own later—No. 6—and if there were then an objection to his speaking, he would have lost his slot.

Mr. Marshall: I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Opposition Members will be as tolerant of my short remarks as we were of the hon. Member's for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson). I notice that no Liberal Democrat Members are here tonight; they are great talkers about community politics, but they have not stayed to take part in them.

I welcome the fact that we are having the debate tonight, because today we see the start of tomorrow's one-day national rail strike, which will cause great hardship to Londoners and other people in the south-east. When there was some comment on the subject earlier today, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that he supported the strike. I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who will be speaking on behalf of the Opposition, will condemn his colleague the hon. Member for Bradford, South, and the strike.

I welcome the fact that the Minister who will be summing up for the Government is the same Minister who made announcements earlier this week about unauthorised gipsy encampments. They have caused great hardship to many people in my constituency. We have had them on the Clitterhouse and Westcroft estates. I am grateful to the Minister for listening to the representations which I and others have made over the past few months. I am glad that he intends to act—in the very near future, I hope.

I have listened with interest to what has been said about the former Greater London council. For 15 years I was an elected councillor in the borough of Ealing. One found that the GLC was a source of duplication and delay. There were frequent disagreements between the boroughs and the GLC which resulted in a Minister having to appoint a planning inspector. Sometimes decisions which could have been reached in four or five months took four or five years. The removal of the delays and the costs has benefited ratepayers and development in London, and will lead to a more prosperous London than we have enjoyed historically.

As we look around, we can see Government policies creating great benefit for Londoners in education, housing and health. Let us consider health for a moment. Trust hospitals like the Royal Free are treating many more patients than they did before. The Tomlinson report will lead to a much better level of general practitioner services in inner London. That will lead to a better, not a poorer, health service.

In housing, we have seen many hundreds of thousands of Londoners become home owners. Tonight there are more vacant beds in hostels in central London than there are people sleeping rough in the centre. We know that many thousands of council houses are empty in certain Labour-controlled boroughs which deprive people of the chance of having homes of their own. It ill behoves the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) to complain about housing in his borough when he knows that for every council house it sells in the coming financial year it can use the capital receipts to build another house or give the money to a housing association.

Mr. Corbyn: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us the whole story—that the discount which the council will have to allow is up to £50,000 per property, so it is impossible on the income from sales to replace the houses that are sold. The hon. Gentleman should tell the House the truth, that what one is doing is selling off the housing assets of London.

Mr. Marshall: One is not selling off the housing assets because the houses do not disappear. The families who lived in them before are still living in them. Islington is getting an opportunity to build new houses which would be available immediately for letting, and people would not have to wait many years for the present tenants to die or leave their homes.

One could say much more about the great education advances under the Government. Hendon school—one of the first to become a grant-maintained school—is heavily over-subscribed, which did not happen when it was a local authority school. One could compare the growth in popularity of that school with the complete failure of Highbury Grove school in Islington, which was once a popular school and over-subscribed. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) was its headmaster, it was a successful school. Today, under the Labour-controlled Islington council it is a disgrace, as the hon. Member for Islington, North will know.

Mr. Corbyn: Has the hon. Gentleman visited it?

Mr. Marshall: I visited it when Mr. Norcross was the headmaster and it was successful then. As we know, it has been condemned now by the inspectors and even by some of the hon. Gentleman's friends in Islington.

I realise that the spokesmen for the two Front Benches have much to say, and it would be wrong of me to deprive them of the opportunity. I hope that I have given the House a few examples of how Government policies are benefiting Londoners, who can compare the efficiency of Barnet with the inefficiency of Lambeth. They can compare the school results of Barnet with those of Labour-controlled councils. Wherever they look, they will find that Conservative councils give good services at much less cost than Labour-controlled councils.

11.54 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on securing the pole position for this slot. I often wonder whether this is the way to do it at this time of night.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Government policies in London and the south-east are certainly an important subject. I hope that the Government will examine carefully the possibility of giving us an all-day debate on London and the south-east so that perhaps more hon. Members can participate and we will have a little more time to discuss the important issues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow talked about decline in the east end. That is something that I know well, coming from an east end constituency. He mentioned begging and sleeping on the streets. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) mentioned the same situation.

The housing crisis in London is critical. I know from my own constituency case-load that housing has become the predominant issue with which I must deal. It now takes up perhaps 60 per cent. plus of all the constituency cases with which I deal. Indeed, one need only see the number of people who are homeless or in bed-and-breakfast and temporary accommodation to realise how dire the problem is. The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) mentioned that people are able to purchase their own homes and how good that was as a Government policy. He must realise that more than 1 million people are living in homes with negative equity, of whom the largest concentration will be in London and the south-east.

The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) attacked the London county council and the houses it had built. I must remind him that that council built some of the finest public sector housing in the world, and it is acknowledged as such. It gave people the first opportunity in London to have decent, sanitary housing. It was a matter of great pride that the Labour party played such a prominent role in achieving that for Londoners—at a time when Conservative politicians also supported the housing policies of the London county council. Since I am old enough now, I remember the days when rival leaders of the two main political parties used to vie with one another to brag about who built the most homes. I would willingly see such a contest being entered again, rather than having the situation which exists in the east end, around London and in other parts of the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow mentioned begging—the young people who beg on the streets of London. It is a disgrace. When I go round the streets of London, I feel ashamed to see so many young people begging. It always comes back to me that it was the present Prime Minister, when he was the Minister for Social Security, who cut off all benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds. He need walk only a few yards from 10 Downing street or the Palace of Westminster to see some of the appalling impact of that dreadful decision to cut off benefits for young people.

We had much discussion from my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), about unemployment in London. Since the slump began in April 1990, unemployment in London has risen from about 200,000 to approaching 500,000. The increase in unemployment in London has been greater than in any other region in the European Community. That is a reflection of the way in which the Government's mismanagement of the economy has led to the United Kingdom performing much worse than all comparable countries in the current difficult times.

It is a reflection of a longer period of neglect by the Government. We look back to 1979 when the Conservative party gained office. At that time, unemployment in London was substantially below the national average. It stood at 2·7 per cent. in June 1979, compared with a national rate of only 4 per cent. under the Labour Government. Since that time, through both downswings and upswings in the economy, London's position relative to the national average has deteriorated. In June 1979, London's unemployment rate was 67 per cent. of the national average. By 1985, it stood at 81 per cent. of the national average. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow said, London's unemployment rate rose above the national average in October 1991, for the first time since records have been kept, and now stands at 11·7 per cent., compared with a national rate of 10·4 per cent.

It is evident that under Conservative Governments, London has been allowed to slide into long-term decline. London has been hit hard by the current slump because the problems that developed in its economy in the 1980s were allowed to fester and grow. Therefore, London was in no position to weather the renewed onslaught of recession.

I shall touch on just a few of the problems. There was a devastating loss of manufacturing employment in the 1980s. From 1985 to 1990, half of all the maufacturing jobs lost in Britain were in London. As a result, London has a warped, unbalanced economy. It relied too heavily on the boom in the finance sector, which gave the impression that all was well. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow said, when the finance sector caught cold, London suffered severely.

Other problems are transport chaos, collapsing rail services and clogged roads. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North said, the air is unfit to breathe. Those are major deterrents to international businesses considering locating in London, as well as to tourists. London's chronically inefficient labour market fails to supply enough workers with high-level skills, yet traps thousands in poverty. During the boom in the late 1980s, when London employers were desperately short of labour, there were never fewer than 200,000 people unemployed in the city. Low-quality Government training programmes offer no solution to the problem. They dump people on the labour market with low levels of skill, where there is already an over-supply of labour. They fail to offer routes upwards to higher levels of skill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow mentioned how the impact of unemployment hits different communities in a different fashion. Unemployment in parts of London is as bad as anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Among young blacks, for example, unemployment in parts of the inner London boroughs now touches 70 and 80 per cent. So it is not surprising that there is so much social unrest. There is no justification for crime or for people taking the law into their own hands, but if we cut off large numbers of people from having any stake or say in the way in which society is run, it is not surprising that social problems proliferate.

My hon. Friends all mentioned transport in London. It is crucial. We have the most expensive urban transport system in Europe. The frustration of everyday travel in

London is apparent to all of us who use public transport in the city. The frustration of bus and railway workers has reached boiling-over point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow mentioned the destaffing of British Rail stations. He mentioned Walthamstow Central station. I could also mention Forest Gate station, which I use daily. As a result of destaffing, there is violence and vandalism. My hon. Friend mentioned fare evasion. Yes, fare evasion is happening all over London. British Rail and London Underground are losing millions of pounds in fares because stations have been destaffed. There is no economic sense in that, if one thinks about it for a moment. It certainly leads to higher levels of vandalism and violence. That is why many Londoners, particularly women, are frightened to use London's transport system, especially late at night.

Privatisation of British Rail will inevitably lead to station closures in London and the south-east. In preparation for privatisation, workers on London buses are being told that if they want to keep their jobs, they will have to take big cuts in wages. I should like to see Conservative Members be prepared to accept that proposition with any degree of equanimity. No wonder the frustration has boiled over into industrial action, which started a few minutes ago. It will lead to great inconvenience for all people who want to use public transport in the capital city.

Although people do not like being inconvenienced by strikes, the majority of Londoners will support the action taken by transport workers in the capital. They know what those workers have to put up with. In the end, if one is ignored and treated with contempt one can only take action to demonstrate one's strength of feeling. All right-thinking Londoners will be on the side of the workers taking industrial action tomorrow. They have been forced into action by Government policies. The transport policy in London is driven by ideology.

I remember that the Prime Minister was once rejected —I might add, wisely—by London Transport as a bus conductor. It seems to me that he is now trying to gain his revenge by dismantling the whole transport system within the capital city.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd)—who I congratulate on launching his petition, which will be signed by many Londoners, calling for a new directly elected authority—mentioned the Confederation of British Industry figure of £10 billion annual cost arising from the congestion in London and the south-east. The answer is not to build more roads—we will come on to that in the debate that follows this one. The way to deal with congestion in London is to improve public transport. That is obviously the thing to do.

The Government have said that they are in favour of a number of schemes, but we have not seen very much action in terms of getting those schemes up and working. There is the Channel tunnel fast rail link—ha-ha; fancy calling it a fast rail link; it will not be built until the next century. It has made us the laughing stock of Europe. Then there is crossrail, which is so desperately needed in London, and the Jubilee line extension. How many more times will the Government dine out on the announcement that they have given their approval to the Jubilee line extension? When is it going to happen is the question that Londoners want answered. A prosperous economy requires a modern, efficient transport infrastructure. Frankly, if we do not recognise that, we will not recognise anything at all.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) mentioned the east Thames corridor, which will be started in Stratford. We welcome the announcement and we will enter, with the Government, into the consultation process, because we think that there are many things to be gained for London and the south-east from this initiative, but there are also many environmental considerations and other matters that have to be taken into account.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West also talked about the governance of London. He said that 31 March marked the seventh anniversary of the end of the Greater London council. We are the only capital city in the world without citywide government. We have no elected strategic body, but we have myriad unelected quangos and indirectly elected bodies trying to deal with London's strategic needs.

My hon. Friend mentioned the London Forum—another bunch of largely Tory business men. There are so many business men with Tory inclinations being appointed to these quangos that I am not really surprised that British business is so bad. If some of these business men spent a bit more time running their businesses instead of trying to run the affairs that ought to be run by locally elected members, Britain would be in a far better situation than it is in today.

The launch of the London Forum took place last Monday at a breakfast that I understand cost the taxpayers £15,000. Some breakfast! Perhaps the Minister would like to tell us what was on the menu.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West also mentioned the police authority—another strategic body that has been set up by the Government. We welcome this announcement. Again, we will join in the consultation process. I was on the GLC when it set up its police committee and proposed an elected police authority for London. We were denounced. Indeed, there was not a great deal of support for it among certain leading members of the Labour party at that time. But, of course, now it has come into our own election manifesto, it is supported by senior police officers, and it has been partially embraced by the Conservative Government. We welcome that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West also mentioned the county hall. It was a studied and deliberate political insult to London to allow a Japanese leisure group to propose turning county hall into a luxury hotel. The London School of Economics wanted to use it as its new base, but that was rejected by the Government. In many ways, it is symptomatic of the entire direction in which this county is going—failing to support one of the world's most eminent academic institutions and flogging it off to the Japanese to turn into a hotel. But there is a long way to go before county hall is turned into a hotel and I will use whatever influence I have to get a commitment to secure it as the natural home of a new strategic authority for London.

I say from the Dispatch Box tonight that it remains a firm commitment of the Labour party in government to establish the Greater London authority. London needs an elected voice, a body to stand up for and speak for Londoners, to restore our sense of identity in the capital

[Mr. Tony Banks]

city. The Greater London authority will do just that, and the next Labour Government will make the setting up of a new authority a real political priority.

12.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I congratulate the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on introducing this important debate. However, Londoners will make their own judgment on Labour's continuing support for strikes and hankering for the return of the Greater London council.

It may be helpful if we look at some realities. London and the south-east have always been central to Britain's economic vitality. The region provides employment for about 7 million people and home to more than 600,000 businesses accounting for some 40 per cent. of our nation's gross domestic product. London itself is a world class financial centre and accounts for some three quarters of the financial and business activity in the country.

In recent years, as the world recession has impacted, the economic pre-eminence of the south-east region has been challenged and the legendary resilience of its economy has been considerably tested. The recession has had a considerable impact on London and the south-east, but we should not forget that this setback developed from a very high starting point. London and the south-east benefited hugely from the 1980s expansion. I firmly believe that the region's infrastructure, industry and economy are now well positioned for London and the south-east once again to take advantage of recovery, which all the signs indicate is imminent.

We are committed to rebuilding confidence in the south-east and London and to restoring their position as the powerhouse of the United Kingdom economy. A return to growth in London and the south-east will be the trigger for growth nation wide.

Our policies for economic growth provide the framework to ensure sustained recovery. They contain many elements which will be of particular benefit to London and the south-east. The autumn statement made clear our determination to give the highest possible priority to capital programmes; that will promote recovery and long-term economic prosperity.

The Budget reinforced our commitment to growth and the revival of enterprise. We now have an economic environment of low inflation and low interest rates and a tax regime which favours recovery. The south-east and London should be exceptionally able to benefit from these policies. London in particular, as a world capital and key international centre for business, culture and tourism, should be able to take advantage of them and enhance its position in future. We are committed to seeing that London maintains its pre-eminence, and that our policies continue to foster its international standing in all those areas in which it so clearly excels. My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor's Budget will ensure lasting recovery. It will boost business this year and tackle Government borrowing in the years ahead. Infrastructure projects in London and the south-east featured prominently in the Budget and fiscal measures such as the boost for export credits will see British business leading the way to recovery.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Lady arrived very late in the debate, but in the spirit of Easter I will certainly give way to her.

Ms Abbott: I am grateful to the Minister and I hope that he has an extra large Easter egg on Easter Sunday. However, my point is serious. The Treasury, the Governor of the Bank of England and the seven wise men—the seven economists advising the Government—are prophesying a recovery, but they are also predicting continuing unemployment at around 3 million. What are the Government planning to do about the structural unemployment in London, particularly in areas such as Hackney, Newham and the inner city?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Lady could hardly imagine that I would be responding to the debate this evening without mentioning our policies to tackle unemployment. If she is patient, I will come to that in due order in my speech. It would be suprising if I did not approach that subject.

Our policies to help industry go beyond those concerned with the economy. Our aim is to create the right environment for businesses to prosper so that they can create jobs. We shall continue in our drive to reduce the burden on industry by identifying and preserving only the regulation which is genuinely needed. We want businesses to be freer to do what they do best—creating the wealth and jobs on which the nation depends.

We also recognise the major part that small firms can play in securing economic health. Our policies offer a wide range of assistance to such companies—access to low-cost consultancy expertise, financial help for innovation and research, and support in looking for export markets. Those are practical demonstrations of our determination to help business, in London and the south-east as elsewhere.

Further support is offered through the training and enterprise councils, the TECs, which aim to ensure that their services to small businesses are employee led, fully in line with local needs and of the highest possible quality. TECs operate business support schemes for small and medium-sized companies throughout London and the south-east.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: I shall not give way because hon. Members raised many issues in this three-hour debate and if I do not respond to them hon. Members will simply complain that the Government did not have the courtesy to do so.

The value of the policies that the Government have pursued has been recognised not only here, but overseas as well. A large number of foreign-owned companies have been attracted to the United Kingdom. London and the south-east are now host to well over 1,000 United States companies, more than 100 Japanese ones and more than 750 from mainland Europe. No other European Community member state can rival Britain's record in attracting inward investment. Such investment might well be curtailed if the Opposition had their way on the social charter. Those companies range from research and development operations, headquarters organisations to high growth, high productivity manufacturing and

production centres. Such good quality inward investment is obviously of local benefit and can create, directly and indirectly, much-needed jobs.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor stated in his Budget speech that he would estabish a special tax regime from 1994-95 to assist foreign-owned companies who wish to set up their headquarters here. So our policies will continue to ensure that for London and the south-east, as elsewhere, we provide the right conditions for enterprise and business to prosper, to create wealth and to create jobs.

We are determined to continue to combat unemployment. Last month the Secretary of State for Employment was able to announce a fall in seasonally adjusted unemployment of nearly 6,000 in London and the south-east region. Clearly, we should be careful not to read too much into one month's figures, but that is still encouraging news.

The Employment Service currently has a budget nationwide of some £360 million, an increase of approximately a quarter on that of the previous year. Day in, day out, the Employment Service helps people into employment. The south-east programme budget of the Employment Service for the coming year will be nearly three times that for the previous year and now stands at nearly £25 million. The availability of a highly trained work force is essential to a healthy economy. The 17 independent, business-led TECs in London and the south-east have a core strategy to expand the skill base of the local work force, thereby forecasting economic growth within their local community. The TECs have taken over responsibility for youth training and the new training for work initiative. In February, nearly 50,000 young people were on youth training in London and the south-east. Three quarters of those who complete their training go on to jobs, further training or education and more than half those who complete their planned training gain a qualification.

As well as investing money in youth training, £180 million will be spent in London and the south-east on training for adults. As well as good training, a good transport system is also vital for the economic and social well-being of London and the south-east. Good transport has a key role to play in sustaining and encouraging employment. That is why we attach the highest priority to improving, modernising and, where appropriate, expanding the transport infrastructure throughout London and the south-east.

The announcements in the Budget were excellent news for public transport, because they made clear our commitment to securing the future of those projects of vital importance to the region's infrastructure—the Heathrow express, the channel tunnel rail link and crossrail. The £300 million Heathrow express project is an example of a joint venture between the public and private sectors, with the bulk of the finance coming from the British Airports Authority. It will further enhance Heathrow's position as the world's leading international hub. It will mean that all three of London's main airports will be served by fast, direct rail links.

We have recently announced our willingness to provide substantial public sector support for the construction of a high-speed rail link between the channel tunnel and central London. We are also examining the crossrail scheme, to link Paddington and Liverpool Street stations, with a view to maximising private sector involvement, so that can also proceed as a joint venture. Construction is ready to start on the Jubilee line extension, once the promised private sector contributions from property owners have been secured.

Other potential projects in the planning stage are the new underground line between Chelsea and Hackney, an extension to the east London line, a big expansion of Thameslink to improve Network SouthEast's north-south services across London, the docklands light railway extension to Lewisham and the Croydon tramlink.

Mr. Tony Banks: We have heard all that before, and we support many of the transport infrastructure decisions, but when are we going to see some of them? How much longer will we have to wait for the Jubilee line extension, which seems to be closest to an agreement? Can the Minister give us any idea when the agreement will be signed?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Member has heard the stories before, and will hear them again. It is important that Opposition Members appreciate the good news in London and the south-east. I have absolutely no doubt that those major infrastructure projects will start in the near future. In today's debate on London and the south-east, not one Opposition Member even mentioned the fact that the channel tunnel—perhaps the largest ever major civil engineering project in this country—was due to open later this year. Opposition Members are completely blind to any good news there might be in London and the south-east; they simply do not wish to share it with the House. If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr Banks) is patient, he will see that we shall be bringing forward the Jubilee line and other major infrastructure projects in the near future. We attach enormous importance to improving transport infrastructure. In London alone, our investment in transport is running at about £2 billion per year, out of a total Department of Transport budget of £7 billion.

There is a clear Government commitment to improving and developing the transport system within the region. To achieve that objective, we are pursuing policies which allow the different transport modes to play their part in responding efficiently to the needs of London and south-east. We are determined to harness the resources and expertise of both the public and private sectors. Just as we are determined to improve the transport infrastructure, we are also determined to improve infrastructure generally and to ensure that every family in London and the south-east has a decent home in which to live.

During last year, the housing market in the south-east continued to be severely affected by the recession. In his autumn statement, the Chancellor announced a huge cash boost to the market. Some £580 million of new money was provided to enable housing associations to purchase new, empty or repossessed homes, to use for the homeless families and others in housing need. Some £200 million of that money has been spent in London, where the pressures have been particularly acute. The housing association sector has responded magnificently to that opportunity. In just 19 weeks, associations throughout London have purchased more than 4,000 homes. Those empty dwellings were clogging up the housing market, and many homeless families have been able to move straight into them. That is helping to alleviate the homelessness problem in

[Mr. Baldry]

London, and further reducing the use of undesirable bed-and-breakfast accommodation, as well as freeing up the whole housing market.

The Chancellor also announced a further £50 million for grants to help up to 3,500 tenants of housing associations and local authorities to buy and move into homes in the private sector. Most of those resources are being spent in London. As a consequence of the relaxation of the capital receipts rules, £500 million of extra capital resources is being invested in housing in London boroughs, which means more money for home refurbishment and estate action.

Seven of the 13 London urban programme boroughs have been successful in their bids for city challenge funding —an average of £37·5 million per borough, and a total investment through city challenge of well over £1,500 million. The Opposition did not say one word about any city challenge projects, either in their constituencies or boroughs, or in London as a whole. With that investment we shall reclaim almost 200 hectares of valuable inner-city land which is currently lying derelict or contaminated; we shall improve or build 12,500 homes; we shall start 2,500 businesses; we shall bring into use nearly 500,000 sq ft of business and commercial floor space; perhaps most importantly, we shall preserve more than 11,000 jobs which might otherwise have been at risk and open up nearly 20,000 new job opportnities.

Our policies for the south-east will need to be reflected in the region's planning regime. Last week, we published regional planning guidance for the south-east in which we laid special emphasis on the east Thames corridor, which provides a focus for long-term growth in the region by recycling mainly urban and derelict land without the need to encroach further on the green belt.

London has outstanding assets as a business centre and unrivalled attractions as a place to live and visit. Like all world cities, it has formidable strengths and we are determined to build on those strengths. We have great confidence in London and the south-east. We are determined to ensure that the area will once again lead Britain, Europe and the world out of recession and into recovery. We have confidence in our policies, and when the electors again have the chance to test the Government, I am sure that they will once again return a Conservative Government, committed to ensuring the continuing revival and growth of London and the south-east.

M25 (Link Roads)

12.25 am

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Were this not a matter of great concern to my constituents and people throughout the south-east and further afield, I might feel some embarassment about raising it tonight. It is, after all, only some two months since I had cause to detain my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic over the same issue. In saying how grateful I am to see him here tonight, at this late hour, I must also say that I can offer no apology for asking the House to return to the matter of the M25 and the proposed link roads. In so doing, I hope to give some of my hon. Friends the opportunity to make known their views on an issue that is of importance and concern to their constituents. I know that my hon. Friends have taken a keen interest in the matter, and that includes my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), who, for family reasons, is not able to be here tonight.

Although it is a matter of deep personal concern to people whose lives, homes, villages, fields and woodlands are directly affected by the proposals, it raises wider issues about transport policy, planning policy, environmental policy and the relationship between all of them. We know that roads and cars are vital to the development of our economy. We know that an efficient transport infrastructure in the south-east—I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment speaking on that in the previous debate—is important not only regionally but nationally. We know that roads and road traffic will continue to play a key role in that. We know that millions of people regard almost as a right the freedom to travel by car, as and when they choose. We know that all commentators agree that demand for road transport, if unchecked, will increase substantially between now and the second decade of the next century.

We also know that roads and cars are damaging to the environment. They are damaging in a local, practical way. When one builds a new road, one inevitably tarmacs over part of a field or somebody's garden, and affects homes and property. In this instance, we are talking about road-widening proposals for green belt land, but there is global damage as well, through emissions of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and carbon dioxide.

We know also that cars are bad for human health. Much more work needs to be done in that area, but, as I said to my hon. Friend when we last discussed these matters, it is not necessary to have a Phd in chemistry to work out that cars damage human health. We are all aware of the tragic consequences that can arise from a running engine in a confined space. I remind the House that in 1990 there were 19 million private vehicles licensed for use on this overcrowded island, and that car traffic had reached 331 billion km a year. Department of Transport forecasts are that those figures will grow by up to 75 per cent. by the year 2015.

These are major issues. My hon. Friend will know that they have been given a thorough treatment in a document entitled "Cars and the Environment: a view to the year 2020", published by the Royal Automobile Club's foundation for motoring and the environment. The fact that a motoring organisation is giving serious thought to these issues is indicative of the way in which the debate about transport and the environment is developing. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that it is vital that the

Department of Transport should be at the forefront of new thinking on these matters and not stuck with an accepted wisdom that fails to recognise changing attitudes and new needs.

It is not an exaggeration to say that one of the greatest challenges facing us as we move towards the millennium is that of reconciling environmental health and transport policies. New technologies will undoubtedly help, but the greatest help would be a change in philosophy at the Department. I believe that the link roads concept fails to meet the problem, because it addresses only the problem of traffic congestion, and that in isolation from other issues. It fails, too, because we know that wider roads have a habit of becoming filled by traffic as the years pass, creating greater traffic jams, more pollution, further pressure for more tarmac in the green belt and more environmental damage.

I am delighted that since our previous debate on these issues there has been a positive development. I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's announcement a few days ago that the Department will be introducing variable automatic speed limits between junctions 11 and 15 on the M25. My hon. Friend will recall that I urged the introduction of just such measures in February. He will know, therefore, how much I welcome his announcement. In Germany and Holland, similar systems have proven that the capacity of motorways can be increased by up to about 10 per cent. They ease traffic flow and reduce the risk of accidents and attendant congestion.

I know that my hon. Friend has tolling much in mind. If road tolls are introduced with sufficient flexibility to the busiest part of the M25, I am sure that they could have a major impact on congestion. The majority of cars are on the motorway for short journeys, and it was not built to take that sort of traffic. The fact that it must do so is a major cause of congestion and of the problems that my hon. Friend is seeking to deal with through his link road proposals. The careful introduction of tolling could well keep local traffic on local roads, thereby freeing the motorway for the trunk journeys for which it was intended.

I know also that my hon. Friend may take the view that failure to tackle congestion on the M25 will make life progressively worse on adjacent roads. I share that concern. There was an incident in my constituency a week or so ago that led to the entire motorway being blocked to traffic. That was the result of a possible terrorist-related incident. The amount of traffic that immediately flowed on to the A25 and other surrounding roads caused severe problems for local people using those roads. I share my hon. Friend's concern about shifting traffic off the motorway and on to local roads. I fully understand his point of view.

Equally, it is important to bear in mind the wider issues that I mentioned. There must be a case for seeing the effect that advanced management systems and tolling have on congestion before proceeding with the development of a 14-lane highway in a crude attempt to satisfy a rising tide of demand that cannot in truth be satisfied.

Let us consider also the regional aspects of my hon. Friend's proposals, which conflict with a regional planning strategy that has been carefully developed over many years to promote development in the east of the region. The west is already crowded. I fear that if that link roads proposal is implemented, that overcrowding will become more severe.

My hon. Friend knows that his link roads proposal is not welcome by Surrey county council, other local authorities, or SERPLAN. Large sums of public money have been spent developing a coherent and balanced regional strategy under the auspices of the Department of the Environment. The link roads proposal does not complement that in any way, but runs counter to it.

One criticism of the link roads proposal and other plans for expanding the motorway's capacity is that they are being developed on a piecemeal basis. Sections of the motorway are being considered in isolation. It is always difficult to develop a coherent, overall strategy if one takes a piecemeal approach, but it is nigh on impossible in the case of an orbital road. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider reviewing the motorway in its entirety. To approach it on a piecemeal basis is further to cut across the developed approach to regional planning.

I ask my hon. Friend to think carefully before making further announcements about the link roads and to bear in mind the points that I raised. I do not raise them glibly but because they reflect the views of locally elected representatives of all parties, local government officers, and the views of many whose lives will be immediately and practically affected by the plans.

My concerns are shared by a growing number of people further afield. They include road users such as myself, who understand the economic importance of road traffic but who are afraid that simple road widening, even on the massive scale envisaged by my hon. Friend the Minister, offers no lasting solution to the present difficulties but instead offers what we should most seek to avoid—a poisoned bequest to our children and to future generations.

12.37 am

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I congratulate my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), on securing this debate and giving a number of us an opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the concerns of our constituents and ourselves about proposals by my hon. Friend the Minister and his Department for link roads around the M25.

I owe my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic an apology, because for the second time in a week I am keeping him from his bed. Earlier this week, when we were all here overnight, my sonorous breathing in the Library disturbed him. Tonight, we are keeping him out of his bed again. We all know that a Minister's life is a dog's life—or some of it, anyway.

I understand the priorities of my hon. Friend the Minister in respect of the M25. He has the job of keeping the main arterial road around London open and flowing with traffic moving at a reasonable speed. I appreciate that he must make plans to try to deal with the ever-increasing density of traffic on the road, and that, if he does not take some action—now and in future—the traffic flow will seize up.

Others will speak for themselves, but for my part I accept—albeit reluctantly—the need to widen the existing M25 to four lanes within the existing boundaries. However, I want to emphasise my concern, and that of my local authority and constituents. We are worried about the effect on the current environmental safeguards. We have all seen central grassed or hedge lanes of motorways being concreted over. I do not know what the Department's

[Mr. Mark Wolfson]

policy is, but I should like to know. Will all the green strips down the centre of motorways eventually be removed in favour of concrete and crash barriers, which will have a much harsher environmental impact?

There is also concern about the existing environmental controls provided by banks and trees within the hedged or fenced limits of the motorway. What will happen to them when the motorway is widened to four lanes? What are the Department's intentions, and how will those environmental safeguards be replaced and, indeed, improved? Current thinking on environmental safeguards is now very much more sophisticated than it was when the road was first built. Will there be sound barriers, and will new trees be planted? Is it right for the Department to try to widen the road within the existing limits, rather than enlarging its land-take to provide the space for adequate noise and air-pollution barriers for the future?

What is the current policy on the width of lanes? When the four-lane widening was first proposed, we were told that the widths of lanes would differ, the widest being on the outside and the narrowest closest to the kerb. That strikes me as a rather dangerous proposal. Will drivers know the width of the lane that they happen to be driving in? Perhaps the idea has been thrown out.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My hon. Friend mentioned trees, which are important in environmental terms. All those green blobs on the maps look very good, and one imagines that a wonderful forest will appear overnight; but, in fact, those blobs will not become trees for 30 or 40 years—for several generations. It is not really a solution.

Mr. Wolfson: I entirely agree. Moreover, if the motorway is widened to four lanes, the trees that have already been planted on the verges may have to go, in which case we shall have to start again from scratch. How does the Department propose to deal with that? As I have said, I reluctantly accept that the road may have to be widened immediately; none the less, I want some answers from the Minister.

Implacable local opposition to the link road proposals is building up. There is great worry about the proposal that, running through green bel: country—some of it of outstanding natural beauty—there should be a 14-lane highway. It is a terrifying prospect.

One sees a comparable width of tarmac only in America, particularly in Los Angeles. If I am wrong, I look forward to the Minister correcting me, giving examples of where 14-lane highways in Britain have been landscaped and telling me that we do not need to worry about them. I shall take a lot of convincing on that score. Such an intrusion into very attractive countryside is an appalling prospect.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the full picture is not emerging of the mounting concern of hon. Members and local authorities throughout the circumference of the M25. Those who are participating in this debate are the ones who may face difficulties during the earliest stages of the proposals. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East said, we are not happy about planning applications for the proposals being submitted on a piecemeal basis. We believe that the only fair way of bringing this matter properly to the attention of the public is to look at the road as a whole, as part of the strategic planning for London and the south-east.

I am concerned, too, about the effect on work and living patterns which widening the road, and in particular building the link roads, will have. Where will this end? It is a short-term solution which, over the next 20 years, might deal with the overcrowding, but if, during those 20 years, we continue to make it easy for people to live in Surrey and work in Hertfordshire, more of them will do so. We shall therefore add to the problem. We must think about population growth, where the jobs will be and whether, in the 21st century, it will make sense to encourage people to travel the distances that they now travel to work, using the road network.

When my hon. Friends and I talk to people who work in our constituencies, we find that often they tell us that they have not moved house because they are now able to get round the M25, even though they may have to start very early in the morning and put up with the great congestion on the road. It allows them to follow their present work and living pattern. What sense does it make to allow that process to continue? It will lead to the same problem all over again in 20 years' time. A 14-lane motorway and its link roads will no longer be adequate; we shall have to create a 20-lane, or more, motorway. We shall be no further forward.

As for noise barriers, is it proposed that better noise protection barriers will be provided? I am pleased that the Department of Transport now accepts that different road surfaces produce different levels of noise. Before my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) became a Department of Transport Minister I remember writing letters to the Department asking whether its officials were aware that some surfaces were quieter than others. They wrote back and said that their experts had told them that there was no difference in the noise level. We were not experts. We were common or garden people, but we could tell that there was a difference. At last, the Department, with or without its expert advice, has accepted that there is a difference and is promoting quieter road surfaces. However, they are not being promoted fast enough. The materials that lead to lower noise levels should be used not just on new roads but on roads that are resurfaced. One of the banes of modern life, which can turn heaven into absolute hell for many of my constituents, is to have a very noisy road running close by. There is no doubt at all that the plans for the M25, as they stand, will result in a horrifying increase in the level of noise.

On the question of noise barriers, we look to experience abroad, where, it appears, there is a much greater readiness to provide new and different types of barrier. Motorways on the outskirts of Paris and those running past other French towns have very tall barriers, and different wall angles are used to break up noise. Then, to disguise the ugliness of the barriers, trees and creepers are planted. There is much more advanced development than has been achieved in this country so far. My expectation is that Kent will follow the good example of Surrey, where parts of the M25 have wooden noise barriers already. We have never had any such things in Kent. I do not know whose fault that is, though I can happily say that the situation arose before I became a Member of Parliament. However, we will try to learn and to see that very much better barriers and bunds are provided in the future.

There is an absolute need for a clear transport strategy in connection with the M25 proposals. The Government must consider, and there must be a public debate about, the balance between road and rail, between bus, train and car. I welcome the proposals for road pricing and the recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport about the possibility of tagging a motorist as a means of measuring the amount of time he spends, for example, driving on London roads and the distance covered. These are sensible policies. We must move from a situation in which people are not immediately aware of the cost of a car journey, as they are aware of the cost of a train journey when they buy a ticket. Only after having met much of the cost of running a car does the motorist buy the petrol, which is the only immediately apparent cost. If we are to control the use of cars, it will be necessary to make a more immediate charge for the use of congested roads. The idea of congestion pricing makes good sense to me.

I want to deal with the question of public transport, which has to be considered in balance with private transport. I call for renewed priority to be given to improvement of the public transport system in London as a corollary to limiting the intrusion of link roads into the countryside in the area of the M25. In the debate on an earlier topic, an Opposition Member quoted a recent CBI survey which suggests that traffic congestion in London costs industry £10 billion a year. As I am a realist in respect of these matters, I do not expect that there will be an opportunity to prevent traffic congestion, however good the public transport system may be. However, there is a good deal of room to make the public transport system in London more comparable with the systems in other capital cities. Paris is the one that I know particularly well. In that city there are at least four highly developed forms of rail transport—the 19th century railway system; the high-speed railways, which run directly into the capital; the metro system, which is comparable to our tube; and the RER high-speed trains, which criss-cross the city at 60 mph. The parallel proposals here are for crossrail and the line from Heathrow to central London.

Those proposals are only a beginning—such services have existed in Paris for 20 years or more. The French had major problems about, among other things, the environment when establishing their services, but they went ahead. I appreciate the fact that French law allows central Government greater freedom to make final decisions than is the case here.

Having used the French system, I know how good it is in comparison with ours. I also know that, year by year, London's public transport system is falling behind that of our continental competitors—and they are competitors. Whatever our political views, we must accept that a good public transport system is an absolute necessity for a capital city which wants to stay in the world class for business.

There are proper interchanges in Paris. The suburban stations on the RER lines have been developed, and bus routes run out to residential areas. The whole system is integrated in a way that we have so far not been able to achieve, so I welcome the appointment of a Minister with responsibility for transport in London. The appointment was long overdue and very necessary.

As a corollary to asking for a more integrated approach to the particular proposals for the M25 link roads, we must accept that it will be necessary to increase investment in public transport in and around London to prevent the countryside from being literally swamped by concrete pathways for the motor car, which would still not enable people to go about their daily business on a decent system.

12.56 am

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): I speak as a keen user of motorways. If I can escape the traffic congestion, I hope to be using a motorway in a few hours, and I do not need the Minister, now or at any other time, to extol the virtues of rapid motor vehicle surface benefits.

The Department of Transport talks of adding another lane to the M25. My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) reminded us that even increasing the number of lanes from three to four involves certain hazards. Without meaning to, the Department has done us a great service. Its link road proposals are sufficiently grotesque—adding another six lanes to what will be eight lanes—will force many people, including me, to say that, although there have been considerable benefits to be had from motorway travel until now, what will happen when we fill up the six new lanes, as we shall? Will we have another six and another six after that?

The policy appears to be to have a bypass around this, an extension to that, and an extra lane somewhere else. Successive Governments have done the same. I sympathise with the Minister because the main problem is to know when it is time to call a halt and recognise that we are heading into the proverbial cul-de-sac. We are not in the Australian outback or the Nevada desert; we are a small country with a finite resource. The image that people have of this green and pleasant land is not one of motorways but of fields, hedgerows and downs, which are relentlessly being eaten up.

I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that there is nothing remotely resembling personal criticism of him, and no offence meant, when I talk about "the Department". I know from experience in government how difficult it is for anyone holding ministerial office to be able to initiate a review of policy, but I have to ask whether even the Department of Transport is capable of producing what I think we need, which is a new transport policy to take us through not only the rest of the decade—it is too late for that—but into the next century.

For example, is the Department of Transport capable of integrating the road and rail aspects of transport? We have my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic —how grateful we are that he is here tonight—and we have a Minister for Public Transport, who is responsible for rail transport. We should feel more comfortable if the Department of Transport issued a proclamation that it was examining the future transport needs of the south-east, and of the whole country. We are focusing on the M25 tonight, but if what I am saying has any force at all, it has equal force anywhere in the country. I am talking about considering transport as an integrated activity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), who initiated the debate so excellently, said that there was a sense of growing unease among many people, and not only in the south-east. That unease is not simply the predictable kind, which enables Departments and civil servants to say, "Oh, well, let us give them some compensation, because some people's houses will be affected," and the other standard stuff that we always hear

[Sir Geoffrey Pattie]

when a bypass is going through a housing estate, or whatever. The unease that people feel about current proposals is different; it is deeper. People are really starting to ask whether we have reached the point in transport development at which basic questions have to be asked and answered.

How will we move people about in the first decade of the next century and beyond? As my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks explained so well, the existence of the M25 has made possible a whole series of journeys that were never possible before. Someone can live in Braintree, for example, and work near Guildford; and there are many such permutations. Who am I to say that that is wrong? But it has drawn traffic in. When the Department of Transport sees that, its answer is, "We must provide more facilities: let us widen the road so that even more cars can come on to the motorway."

That represents one of the rare examples that I can think of in this country of our not providing market mechanisms such as tolls. On a personal note, I must admit that I am one of the people whom my hon. Friend the Minister and his proposals are trying to get at. I frequently get on to the M25 and leave it at the next exit, because my constituency of Chertsey and Walton is situated precisely between exits 10 and 11. If I had to pay £25, or whatever, for the privilege at peak time, I might think twice about doing that.

In the past two weeks the Minister has produced what seems, prima facie, a sensible proposal—to manage the flow of traffic with speed restrictions. But I ask him to consider the results. Apparently the proposal would result in large gantries appearing over the 14 lanes. I know that there will not be 14 lanes at the pilot stage, but let us look ahead at the grotesque nightmare that will eventually materialise. There will be 14 lanes and gantries with all sorts of messages on them, and drivers will be jockeying for position, trying to work out what the signals are telling them to do. Are they to reduce their speed or increase it? If they are three lanes from the lane they ought to be in, it will be like the dodgems.

Simply adding more lanes on the scale proposed is not the answer. Had the Department been smart enough a few years ago to leave a slightly wider curtilage, which would have enabled it to move first from three to four lanes, then from four to five in two or three year's time, and then from five to six, it would have got away with it. It would have seemed unreasonable for my hon. Friends and I in future debates to say that we did not like the fifth lane, or were not happy about the sixth lane, when only one lane was being added.

This is the big leap: we are to have an extra six lanes. My hon. Friend the Minister must not underestimate the intensity of the opposition, which is not based just on the fact that people are saying that they already live near it and do not like it or that they will lose their houses. The people who will lose their houses are lucky. We are beyond that —we are talking about colossal environmental damage and fantastic pollution.

The Department needs to think about work patterns, and about the 60,000 or 70,000 people who work at Heathrow, nearly all of whom drive to work, and many of whom would not do so if a satisfactory alternative transit system existed. My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks has described cogently the Paris transport system. The sad fact that we have to face, which involves successive Governments, is that we have not solved the problem of how to move people from the conurbations around London in and out of the city, whether they are travelling for leisure or for business purposes.

I urge my hon. Friend to take the message back to his Department from the debate that this is not just a knee-jerk reaction by a bunch of well-meaning Members from the shires, as I suppose we are called. This is but the start. These are the early shots in a campaign which will last a long time. It will last as long as his Department persists with the proposals. We intend to use whatever means we can to encourage the Department, if I may put it in those terms, to justify what it is doing and to urge it every step of the way to think again and to develop the integrated transport policies that we believe are the only sensible recipe for transport use in the early part of the next century.

1.7 am

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My hon. Friends who have taken part in the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) have covered much of the ground involved in the effective doubling of the M25. I want to paint a picture of the area where it is proposed to start, which may not be familiar to all hon. Members—roughly the part between the M4 and the M3, going towards Chertsey, in other words, Egham to Chertsey. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) will forgive me for mentioning Chertsey, but I had the honour to represent the people in that area until they took the wise decision to have him instead of me.

It is a lovely area. From St Anne's hill at my hon. Friend's end of the constituency, to the village of Thorpe in my constituency, to the ancient town of Egham on the edge of the River Thames, it is a great beauty spot. Thorpe is a beautiful village, surrounded by the M25, the M3 and the Thorpe water park, which is quite agreeable on a nice day. The village will be squeezed even more by the doubling of the M25. It is a lovely village with its ancient church. Coincidentally, it is reputed to be the place where the first Christian worship took place, so it is an historic church. Thorpe is a traditional English village where people have lived happily for hundreds of years.

I shall pick up the theme of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton. He said that people originally accepted the M25. There was an understanding that there had to be a belt road round London to avoid congestion in the capital. People accepted it, although it did enormous damage when it was built. The M25 goes close to the village of Thorpe and touches the town of Egham. As my right hon. Friend said, the noise is appalling.

People accepted the road because there was a national interest in it and they understood the logic of it. None of them in their wildest imaginations believed that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic would make this proposal. My hon. Friend is benign, extremely efficient, charming and distinguished. He has only good attributes: I cannot think of a single negative attribute. That is a rare thing to say about any Minister—we get to know the negatives quickly. My hon. Friend the Minister does not have any negative attributes. The only problem was that he

made this proposal. People could not believe that someone would double the motorway. It was absolutely astounding. In the years that I have represented this lovely part of the world, I have known nothing like the anger and horror which spread.

When the proposal was mooted, it was fascinating. I went to an exhibition in Egham in the literary institute building. The building is beautiful and I commend it to my hon. Friends who have not yet been there. There were two gentlemen from the Department of Transport at the exhibition, although my hon. Friend the Minister was not there. There were a lot of anxious burghers of Egham at the meeting who asked the officials, "Even if we accept these feeder roads—which we certainly do not, but let us say that we do simply for the matter of argument—as necessary to resolve the present problems, for how long will they resolve the problems? What will happen when the feeder roads get filled up? Will you take another eight lanes or build something on top or underneath?" We were treated like idiots. The officials may have been right or wrong. We may be idiots. We got the odd reply that those matters are not relevant because this solution will be the all-time solution. We heard the same thing when the M25 was built.

We have the advantage of some traffic flows which are expected in the year 2015—they were announced in a parliamentary question. That is a few years on. Undoubtedly, my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will still be in the same position: he may even be the Secretary of State for Transport by then. There will certainly be a Conservative Government. In 2015, he will be 74. We will probably have another Adjournment debate to discuss this issue and it may well be at an uncivilised hour, as well. My hon. Friend the Minister will be 74 and I will be 81, so it will be much worse for me. Undoubtedly, I will stagger or totter into the Chamber and say that this sort of thing is wrong.

The figures show that nearly a quarter of a million cars will travel between junctions 14 and 15 daily. They are silly figures because we know that such figures have always been wrong. My hon. Friend the Minister has given the figures in all honesty, and he is a man of the highest integrity. I do not believe that he is trying to trick anyone. However, I do not think that any true credibility can be given to the figures. Forecasts are made and it is said that this will be the all-time solution until the year 2015; but the figures could be at least 50 per cent. wrong. I believe that the initial figures for the M25 were more than 50 per cent. wrong.

We know what is happening. The Department feels that it must do something—and that is understandable. It is what politics is about: instant action to get instant results. However, as my hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, East and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) said, when one is talking about the future of the countryside and green belt areas, one cannot be short-termist. Once it has been concreted over, it cannot be deconcreted. People in our part of the world have accepted the M25 as being generally in the national interest, but hereafter we face creeping concretisation—if I may be allowed to use that phrase. It is short-termism gone mad.

We need some real lateral thinking, not the knee-jerk reaction of putting a few more lanes in to keep the whole thing going. I do not know how the suggested traffic slowing measure would work. If traffic on one part of a circular road goes at 50 mph and on another part goes at 80 mph, one does not need to be a great mathematician to realise that at some stage there might be a nasty bump. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton said, one has to read the gantries. I would not be able to read them at all, let alone concentrate on them. So perhaps that is not helpful.

We need to examine how we shall deal with the car. In the past 25 years, the growth in the number of cars has been enormous. Somehow the country has just survived. But our south-east of England has become very crowded. If one takes the increase in traffic in London in the past 25 years and doubles it for the next 25 years, one can conclude that, although the traffic flows slowly now, it would come to a full stop then. So we must do some careful thinking.

First, we must conduct an environmental study of the whole M25. We should not deal with it piecemeal. I do not want my hon. Friend the Minister to think that I am being critical—perish the thought—but I believe that there is an element of divide and rule in the Government's policy. They think, "We will pick off Grylls in this part. We can dispose of him easily. We can eat him for supper. Then we will take the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton." He would be rather a more substantial meal than me. They may get indigestion.

We are not too much trouble individually. Tonight, unfortunately for the Government, four of us happen to be together so we are a proper repas, to coin a French phrase. The Government have to do better. We must look at the environmental dimension. I do not want to stray into European policy in a debate on a national issue, because I know that you would tick me off, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, there may be room for calling back that EC figure who was much derided by some of us—Mr. Ripa di Meana.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: He has retired.

Sir Michael Grylls: Perhaps he has retired or perhaps he is in prison for taking a few pourboires that he should not have taken. Good luck to him. Perhaps we want another Mr. Ripa di Meana to have a look at the whole of the M25 and find some less damaging solutions.

My hon. Friend the Minister has one great attribute which I have not yet mentioned. I do not want to leave any out. He is a real country man. He loves the country and represents the beautiful county town of Lincoln in a beautiful part of England. He understands well the need to preserve the countryside. Perhaps we should look more seriously for solutions to traffic problems. The Government have mentioned road pricing. It would be difficult to operate, but it is a better solution than telling people that they should not use their cars. That would not be feasible. The car is part of our life for the foreseeable future in a free country. As a Conservative, I do not believe that people should be told not to use their cars.

Using price as a way to control the use of cars would be more acceptable than creeping concretisation. This is not the time to go into the technicalities of road pricing, but certainly it can be done without people having to put money into boxes. We can do it with technology. Perhaps another way—I do not necessarily propose this, but I want to put some new thinking into the debate—would be somehow to limit the amount of petrol that people can buy. I do not like rationing. The hon. Member for

[Sir Michael Grylls]

Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is going to have a bit of fun in a moment. He would love to intervene, I am sure, and I would love to give way to him, but time is short.

Perhaps petrol is the key—pricing petrol according to how much is used. A motorist has £500 worth at the normal price, and the next £500 worth at double the price.

Some thought must be given to bringing pricing into the use of cars. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton was right when he said that we are a very small country. But we are particularly blessed because we have had sensible policies that preserve the green belt, so we still have lovely parts of our country, even near great cities such as London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. That has been a precious policy that we must not eat into. If we do, future generations will never forgive us.

So let us look at road pricing very seriously. Even if these feeder roads happen—there is a big question whether they will—when they get blocked up again in the year 2015, and my right hon. Friend is 74 and I am 81, we will still have to come to road pricing, I am absolutely sure. So why not do it now, and not destroy more and more of the countryside?

There is another area that I commend to my hon. Friend, because he is a member of the Government, whom I support with great enthusiasm, and they have a temporary problem with their borrowing, which is forecast to go to a very high level temporarily, until we can bring it under control. I know that my hon. Friend will wish to play his part in bringing that excessive spending under control, because he is a very sound economist and I have discussed these things with him. He wants to see sound money and prudent finances. He does not like high spending any more than I do, and we are spending far too much as a country. I am perfectly sure that he will want to make his contribution from his Department. He is, and would like to be even more, I am sure, the blue-eyed boy of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who needs to bring the financial situation under control.

Most hon. Members come to the House and ask for more money for their constituents—a bit more money for this hospital, this school, that bypass. I am going to shock the House and suggest tonight that my constituency could do without £144 million, which is the estimated cost of this first stage of the feeder road system. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be the first to congratulate me on that generous gesture and will tell the Chief Secretary that the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West has made a generous gesture, and it should be recognised, appreciated and accepted here and now.

We have a very famous part of the country in north-west Surrey called Runnymede, where the Magna Carta was signed. There are some statues and memorials there, and my hon. Friend would surely deserve a statue in that famous field if he accepted my proposal to save £144 million of taxpayers' money. That would be good for the Budget and good for the borrowing requirement. It would please the Chancellor, and we always like to do that. It would give us time to look very seriously at this issue of how we keep the M25 moving and how we deal with the motor car for the next 25 years, while preserving the freedoms that we all want to preserve.

I want to leave my hon. Friend under no misapprehension about the anger that is felt about this proposal in my constituency, and in other constituencies, too; there is also the fear that people's main asset, their home, is under threat. It is not the house that is compulsorily purchased that is the problem; it is the house whose occupants can no longer go into the garden. Their house is not only unsaleable; it is uninhabitable.

Mr. Wolfson: In support of that point, is my hon. Friend aware that there have been road widening schemes in the area near Maidstone and the current compensation arrangements are quite appalling? It is an inadequate way of protecting his constituents from the ravages of road widening.

Mr. Grylls: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. No one dreamt there would be such noise. My constituents accepted the concept and the building of the M25, but they had no idea what the noise would be, and nor did the planners or the Department. They had no idea what the traffic flow would be, so they could not have known about the noise. Now it will be virtually doubled and that is intolerable.

Like those of my hon. Friends here tonight, mine is a loyal Conservative constituency which has always returned a Conservative Member of Parliament, as far as I know. I am sure that it will continue doing so, but the anger of my constituents with their own Government knows no bounds. They are deeply upset and angry and they do not believe that sufficient thinking has gone into the plans.

We need lateral thinking and we need to pause. Let us save the money, and let us find a sensible way of dealing with the problem and not do it through wholesale destruction.

1.25 am

Mr. Tony Banks: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to make some comments about the proposal.

I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on his choice of subject. Having heard the proposal, it is not surprising that the widening of the M25 should have stirred up the Conservatives in the way it has done this evening. I have great sympathy with Conservative Members, and indeed with all the people who will be affected if the Government are foolish enough to go ahead with the proposal. The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) was too kind to the Minister. Perhaps he feels that his gentle persuasion will cause the Minister to rethink, but there are signs of a juggernaut behind the proposal and I am not sure whether the Minister has the power to stop it.

So many proposals start in the fevered minds of planners and civil servants, are taken up by Ministers and, despite the fact that hon. Members across the House consider them to be absolutely appalling, nothing is done about it. No one has spoken in favour of the proposal. Although the Government Whip might speak in favour of it if he had the opportunity to do so, I suspect that he would be a minority voice among those who understand and are directly affected. If Parliament means anything at all, the wishes of Members of Parliament who represent the area covered by such a proposal ought to be taken seriously into account. It will not bother me if the Minister outrages his own side. I welcome the thought of large numbers of Conservative seats falling at the next county

council elections, as they may very well do as a result of the proposal. It is not for me to tell the Minister that if he wants to save his political skin and some of his colleagues on county councils in the area he should do something about it. That is his problem.

If the proposal is implemented, it will be devastating to the environment and to the communities, which happen to be represented in large measure by Conservative Members, but that does not mean that there are no Labour voters in the area and that we have no concern for people, whoever they vote for and whoever they elect to the House of Commons.

Sir Michael Grylls: The hon. Gentleman is probably aware that Surrey county council, as a body, and all the Conservative councillors are dead against the proposal and have been fighting it every bit as hard as Conservative Members.

Mr. Banks: I was aware of that fact. The only thing that will concentrate the Government's mind, however, is if they see their party suffering electoral reverses in the county council elections. That might sound like an obvious point for me to make, but I do not want to rejoice in Tory defeat by seeing the scheme go ahead. If the people of Surrey, Kent, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Essex want to send a clear message to Ministers, perhaps they should do so by voting out Conservative county councils—even when they know that those councils are as much opposed to the M25 proposals as they, the electors, are.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: I must take issue with the hon. Gentleman on that point. The people of Surrey, Essex, Kent and Berkshire are not foolish. They know where they stand on the proposals, which they are against. They know that their locally elected authorities share their opposition. They know that their best chance of getting the proposals thrown out is by re-electing Conservative councillors who will be able to liaise closely with their Members of Parliament to persuade my hon. Friend the Minister to see sense.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Minister has not seen sense up to now, even after listening to an awful lot of his hon. Friends trying to tell him why he should. Conservative Members should be more forceful in their treatment of the Minister. Instead of treating him with kid gloves, perhaps they should strangle him—that would be the best way to concentrate his mind.

I understand that Conservative Members are serious about their opposition to the proposals, but I believe that some serious electoral reverses will have to be suffered by their party in their areas so that the Minister understands the depth of local feeling. If a Labour Government were to make such a proposal, I would be up in arms—I would not go toadying to a Labour Minister to beg him not to be nasty to my constituents.

The proposals will have a devastating impact on the affected areas and it is amazing that the Government can come forward with them. In 1986, on the day the M25 was completed, the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, described it as "a magnificent achievement". That was a hollow claim even then. Even before its completion, planners realised that they had hopelessly underestimated traffic growth on the motorway. Traffic in the north-west sections grew by between 30 and 70 per cent. within six months of the final stage being completed. Although it was expected to carry 79,000 vehicles a day in 2001, traffic on some western sections already exceeds 200,000 vehicles.

In 1988, two years after completion, 21 out of 26 sections were carrying more traffic than they were designed to carry. The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West referred to the possible intervention of the European Community and the former Environment Commissioner, Carlo Ripa di Meana. The Government's proposal that eight lanes should be completed by 1996 and 14 lanes by 2007 cuts out public discussion and debate in the affected areas. No full plan will be debated, so the environmental impact assessments which the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West wants will not be prepared. They will be prepared for one section at a time. Some sections will be widened before consultations and inquiries into other sections have taken place. That is a ridiculous and irresponsible way to undertake such a development.

The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West also said that he intended to ask Ministers not to spend money in his constituency. I understand why, because the total cost of the 14 lanes will be £2·8 billion at 1990-91 prices. That money could be used to build crossrail, which would be a good way to relieve congestion within the M25 area.

I have a list of all the towns, villages and sites of special scientific interest affected in Kent, Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Read it out.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend asks me to read it out, but I cannot do so as it contains dozens and dozens of villages. Widening the M25 to 14 lanes will devastate the countryside around London. Some 60 per cent. of the area affected lies in the green belt. Up to 26 sites of special scientific interest—the official title given to the United Kingdom's most precious wildlife sites—lie near the M25. Seventeen of them lie within 500 metres of it, and many will be damaged or destroyed. The M25 passes through three areas of outstanding natural beauty—the official term used for areas of beautiful countryside—the Chilterns, the Surrey hills and the Kent downs. Widening it would further damage those areas.

The proposal is not the way to deal with congestion. I think that it was the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) who said that if the motorway is widened it will be the widest motorway system outside north America. We know what happens: the more roads one builds, the more traffic comes on to them. The Roads Federation will then demand that more roads be built. People in the Department of Transport seem obsessed with building more roads. I wish that they were more obsessed with building railways in this country, but the cry is always for more roads. The roads lobby, with which Conservative Members are dealing, is a powerful political force. As the roads become wider, more traffic uses them, and so the demand increases.

The scheme is crazy, irresponsible and destructive. The Opposition bitterly oppose the proposal to widen the M25. If the Minister does not listen to me—and I doubt whether he will—I hope that he will listen to Conservative voices as on this occasion they are telling the truth and it is about time that he listened.

1.32 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I, too, am glad that tonight's subject for debate was chosen. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on securing it, and I congratulate my hon. Friends for turning up in such force to participate in it. The subject is important and I have found the arguments of great interest and thought. I hope to respond satisfactorily to my hon. Friends, but the debate is a continuing one and will go beyond tonight as it involves the development of our transport policy, which is important and enduring. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East has returned to the subject, which I welcome, and I know that he will do so again. He also expressed the interest of some of my hon. Friends.

I was glad to visit the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) only a week or two ago to look at the problem on site. He showed me the road from all angles and I met many of his constituents. He made me aware of his concern. In the House, and on other occasions, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) have also ensured that their great concerns are fully aired. I thank them for being present tonight.

I shall try to answer the issues raised. First, however, it is important to consider the present needs of the M25, which is one of the most important roads in this country. Since it was opened, the traffic on it has increased. It has served its purpose well and has drawn traffic away from London, but now its busiest sections—sections 12 to 15, to which the proposal relates—carry up to 200,000 per day. That is nearly double the amount of traffic for which the road was designed.

There has been much talk about expanding other forms of transport, which we support. We want a balanced transport system, and put about as much money into railways and public transport as we do into roads. But 90 per cent. of freight and people travel on our road system. Even if we doubled the number of people who travelled by train, we would hardly dent the numbers who travel by road. The M25 is already full to overflowing, so the problem is one that we face now, not one that will have to be faced in 10 years' time. We need a better road system now.

The M25 is not just a local road, although surprisingly it is that as well—two thirds of the traffic which gets on at the M3 gets off at or before the M4—so we can look at sections of the M25 in their own right, serving a local community. It also serves as an important road for through traffic. I have more letters than ever saying that we must improve the road. People write from Scotland to say that the biggest bottleneck between Scotland and their markets is the M25. We must stand up for a big silent majority who want not to face congestion on roads, and who want the roads to be improved.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton is important in the industrial world, and is an important man in my constituency of Lincoln, where he is the chairman of some of the companies there. When I visit those companies, the biggest complaints that I have about their ability to compete is that communications are not good enough and it takes them too long to get their products to Heathrow or the channel ports. It is therefore vital for the economies of communities north of Watford, in Lincoln, in Yorkshire and in Lancashire, that the M25 should work well, and we are determined to ensure that our plans for the M25 relate to that.

My hon. Friends have said that they want to see the future of the M25 set in its strategic context. That is the right way to go about things, and it is what we seek to do. Many papers have done so. For example "Roads for Prosperity" in 1989 had a section on the M25, and that was followed up by the White Paper of 1990. We also had, in 1989, the M25 review, which dealt specifically with the M25, followed in 1990 by the M25 action plan, which again looked at the M25 in its strategic context. I have promised my hon. Friends and the county councils representing the areas surrounding the M25 that when we come up with the results of the consultation paper on link roads we shall have a further paper on our strategy for the M25.

The case for a better M25 is proven by the existing weight of traffic on it, by the needs of the economy and by the congestion. People who live around the M25 should ponder a little on what happened when it was closed by the false alarm that a bomb had been placed on it. Traffic was forced on to local roads, where it had been before the motorway was built, causing great inconvenience to all the local communities. The number of cars on the roads will further increase. We have fewer cars per person than Germany and France, but as prosperity returns, more cars will be bought. If we do nothing to the M25, and do not improve that existing route, in 10 or 15 years' time, those communities will be angry about the congestion. There is an argument that we should seek to keep traffic on existing routes so that it does not spill over into surrounding communities.

I agree that there is a strong argument that we cannot continue merely to build roads. We must have new thinking, and within the Department there is the genesis of many new initiatives. First, we can use new technology —some of which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton produces—to manage roads better. We are increasingly erecting variable message signs on motorways to enable us better to manage traffic flows. We recently announced a trial of controlled motorways, which we hope will help to improve the flow on existing motorways. As that will not be enough, we are examining pricing. I may be unpopular as a result, but I must say that we are considering it.

We are undertaking some research into road pricing within towns and cities. That is city congestion charging. We hope that we shall be able to develop ideas and technology so that if we wanted to go ahead with an experiment, we could do so. It is important to separate towns and cities from the flow of traffic between communities. We have said that in May we shall be producing a Green Paper on motorway charging, which will be between cities. I shall be grateful if my right hon. and hon. Friends respond to the paper. As the Minister with responsibility for roads, I recognise that it is vital to improve the flow of traffic between towns and cities. The roads which link them are, unfortunately, not yet good enough. They are far worse than their counterparts in many other countries on the continent. Our inter-urban roads need to be improved, even if we have to move towards some concept of motorway charging in the long-run. I am convinced that within towns and cities we cannot make provision for ever more traffic. Therefore, we are developing comprehensive packages within towns.

The other day I visited Chester, where we have helped to fund a park-and-ride scheme. Eventually, there will be five or six extremely good car parks on the edge of the city, where motorists will park their cars before taking a 10-minute journey into the city centre at a very cheap rate.

We are examining city congestion charging, park and ride, controlled parking, bus routes, and so on. These ideas are developing quickly in our communities. There is much to be said for the integration of transport, but I tend to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West that we cannot dictate to people what they may or may not do. We must depend very much on the private sector to ensure that a bus meets a train when it arrives at a station. Within that use of the private sector, we are seeking integration. In the coming year we shall invite local authorities, when they bid for transport supplementary grant, to adopt what we call a package approach, if they can develop one. That means submitting a bid which can balance, as it were, buses, railways, the need for roads, park and ride, and so on. That is a useful initiative.

My right hon. and hon. Friends are rightly worried about the environment and it is important that we adopt a sensitive approach to the building of roads. First, we accept that it is difficult to build a road on a green-field site. If we do not improve existing routes, however, we may be forced to build a road where one did not exist before. If we are to improve our road system, we must expand existing routes—that is the way to do it.

The realistic speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks dwelt on environmental aspects. There have been improvements in that respect. Our "Good Roads Guide" described how new roads are made to fit better into the landscape, and false mounding and false cutting is used far more imaginatively. I agree with my hon. Friend that there is great scope for higher and more environmentally friendly noise barriers. Such new techniques, together with quieter road surfaces, will be used to make roads more acceptable.

When designing roads, we must consider each section in detail to determine how it should be constructed. My hon. Friend asked how the road would be constructed in his constituency, if we decide to widen within the existing boundaries after consultation. If my hon. Friend will visit the Department, we can show him how each section will be dealt with in the most sensitive way. If we were to go ahead with link roads on the west of the M25, the road's existing design would be improved. About two-thirds of the land taken for the link roads would be used for landscaping —the planting of trees, banks, mounding, and otherwise making the road less obtrusive. When I visited the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West, I reached the conclusion that our designs would make the road less intrusive than it is today. If we went ahead with the link roads, we would take great care to design them properly.

As my hon. Friends know, we take consultation seriously and have consulted on the link roads. I cannot say yet what we shall do because we have not concluded our consideration of that consultation. If we were to go ahead because the existing need for the road was considered pre-eminent, we would bring forward a full environmental assessment. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should understand that. It is not as he said. We would attempt to take people with us when we announced the preferred route and would show them the plans in more detail. They would of course have the right to a full public inquiry at which they could advance their views.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the public inquiry and related procedures would be on a motorway-wide basis, and not deal with one section after another?

Mr. Carlisle: It has to be on the road that is being built. It would not make any sense to hold an inquiry on junctions 12 to 15 and on the Dartford bridge at the same time. They are not related closely enough. When one considers the flow of traffic on the M25, it is clear that it is a local road. My right hon. Friend said that he uses just one section, as he nips to his surgery and back again. When the results of the consultation are published, and if we are to go ahead, we shall produce a strategy document which will consider the M25 in the round.

Sir Michael Grylls: Will my hon. Friend undertake to include in his paper all the options for the feeder roads?

Mr. Carlisle: I shall try to be as helpful as possible. I believe that there is an economic need for a better M25. We shall consult, and we shall be as sensitive as possible. I fully understand that we must develop our thinking about how to manage traffic in the future. Although roads are economically important, we all know that they are only a part of life and need to fit sensibly into the existence of a civilised society.

Atomic Test Site (South Australia)

1.54 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): This debate was prompted by the civilised and honourable campaign conducted by the Maralinga people of South Australia to have their land—or much of it—restored to them in a way that will allow the continuation of a culture that has existed for many years.

Between 1953 and 1957, the United Kingdom Government conducted nine atomic tests and 700 minor trials in the traditional lands of the Maralinga people. Those lands were restored to them in 1984 by the South Australian Government's Maralinga—Tjarutja land rights. The Maralinga people were traditionally nomadic, roaming across the Maralinga lands. From the 1920s, rations and a rudimentary education were offered to them by a mission at Ooldea, which was located on the east-west railway line. That mission, however, was abandoned in 1952.

In fact, 1952 was a momentous year for the people. It was in that year that the aborigines who had inhabited Maralinga lands were placed in a mission at Yalata, several hundred miles south of their tribal lands. The people were not consulted; they were simply moved by forces attached to the South Australian and federal Australian Governments. They stayed at Yalata and elsewhere until as recently as 1984. Some of the elders—including Hugh Windlass, who visited this Parliament not long ago—attempted to return to their lands, but were set back to Yalata by federal Australian nuclear test personnel.

Despite the setbacks, the Maralinga people were determined to return to their lands. They began a long struggle for land rights, which culminated, in December 1984, in the grant of title to 76,000 sq km of their lands by the South Australian Government.

The issue of the contamination of atomic nuclear tests sites arouses widespread interest—and, indeed, controversy—among those who seek to defend the interests of soldiers who, it is legitimately claimed, have suffered because of their physical involvement in such tests. On 14 March, *The Observer* said:

"Britain is facing a multi-billion-dollar bill to clean up hundreds of square kilometres of land seriously contaminated with radioactivity from its testing of nuclear bombs. Legislation before the US Congress threatens to make Britain pay its share of a huge decontamination project at the Nevada test site, which is leaking plutonium and other dangerous radionuclides."

The position in Australia is much less grave. The same article, written by Geoffrey Lean, states:

"Meanwhile, Australia is demanding that Britain should pay a much smaller bill for the clean-up of the Maralinga test site, which it used before moving to Nevada . . . A joint British and Australian investigation concluded that a full clean-up would cost £300 million. The Government and Aborigines have agreed to a £45 million programme."

I should be interested in the Minister's reaction to the press report; the figure of £45 million may be sheer press speculation.

Many people are interested in the issue. Yesterday morning I received a letter from Ken McGinley, the chairman of the British Nuclear Tests Veterans' Association. He says:

"Dear Mr. Godman,

Nuclear Tests—Maralinga.

I write on behalf of the Maralinga Veterans and indigenous peoples of Australia who, I feel, have been treated extremely shabbily since the Atomic Bomb tests in the 1950's. It is the British Government's responsibility to clean up the Maralinga range and fully compensate the Aboriginal people for using their land for scientific purposes."

Councillor McGinley—he is a district councillor in Renfrewshire—goes on to make an interesting observation:

"It is a fact that during the 1950's the British Government was contemplating using Wick [in Scotland] as a testing ground for atomic trigger devices. However, this did not materialise because (according to Lord Penny . . .) the climate was too wet! Otherwise the inhabitants of the north of Scotland would be in the same predicament today as are their Australian counterparts."

Ken McGinley goes on to say:

"It is ironic that countries who have been involved in nuclear testing would not carry out these tests in their own countries."

Some two and a half years ago, Archie Barton, Hugh Windlass and a number of others from Maralinga Tjarutja formed a delegation and came to London with the objective of securing a sympathetic response from both Ministers and Members of Parliament to what I believe to be their entirely reasonable claim that the contaminated land should be cleansed and, wherever possible, made safe for traditional aboriginal life and culture.

I readily acknowledge that our Australian visitors received a courteous reception from the Minister concerned and his officials. They also elicited a great deal of sympathy from Members on both sides of the House. However, nothing was achieved in terms of their legitimate claims. Consequently, a second delegation was sent by the Maralinga people to the Minister with the appropriate responsibilities, Lord Cranborne. Again the response was extremely courteous. Lord Cranborne is a very courteous man. However, matters remained largely unchanged.

The frustration and anger of these fine and decent people concerning what they see as this Government's failure to honour certain obligations that they have towards them and their land is mounting. This, to my mind, disgraceful state of affairs must be ended by joint action being undertaken and financed by the federal Government of Australia and the United Kingdom Government.

I ask the Minister, who always in these debates and others listens with characteristic attention, to accept my view that now that the dust has settled in the wake of the Australian federal election, Prime Minister Keating and our Prime Minister should sign an agreement that would satisfy the needs of the Maralinga people.

Perhaps I could offer a word or two about my involvement in this affair. At the time of Archie Barton's initial visit, a number of Opposition Members discussed the possibility of our visiting the site in South Australia. We agreed that if any one of us were lucky enough, a special effort should be made to travel to Maralinga Tjarutja in order, among other things, to discuss the problems with the local people. For me, that ambition was realised last September, when I had the honour of being appointed deputy leader of the United Kingdom's Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation for a three-week visit to Australia. I am not being facetious when I say that I was in interesting company. The group included the hon. and irrepressible Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). It was an agreeable lot, ably led by the distinguished Conservative hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). We travelled to Maralinga

Tjarutja in the company of two representatives of the South Australia Parliament—Mr. Graham Gunn, a Liberal Member, and Mr. Kevin Hamilton, a Labour Member. Those gentlemen were extremely kind, courteous and helpful to their United Kingdom visitors, and I am telling the truth when I say that both were utterly committed to the Maralinga cause. It is my view that this reflects the cross-party support to be found in the state Parliament of South Australia and in the federal Parliament in Canberra.

For our part, we quickly discovered that there were no party political differences between United Kingdom Labour and Conservative Members. In proof of the continuing cross-party support, I quote from a letter that I have received from the hon. Member from Stratford-on-Avon:

"Dear Norman

I am extremely pleased that you have been able to secure the opportunity for a debate here in the House of Commons on cleaning up the former United Kingdom atomic test site at Maralinga. I am only very sorry that I am unable personally to attend this debate, which is to be held at short notice."

The hon. Gentleman refers to the delegation of which we were members and to our briefing, both in Adelaide and at Maralinga. The letter goes on:

"I know that all of us were both impressed and moved by the case put to us by Archie Barton and other representatives of the Maralinga people. I know too that there is a body of opinion in all parties in the British House of Commons that is anxious to secure rapid progress towards a settlement of the outstanding issues which is accepted as fair and reasonable among all concerned.

Speaking for myself, I do not think that environmental standards which may have been found acceptable in 1968 are adequate today. I believe that responsibility for clearing up the test site should be accepted as resting jointly with the British and Australian Governments."

I make no apology for having quoted at some length from the hon. Gentleman's admirable letter. I believe that if his hon. Friends the Members for Billericay and for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) were here at this bleak hour they would be only too willing to voice identical sentiments. The other two Members of the delegation, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), who is an old friend, and Baroness Hollis of Heigham, hold exactly the same view.

This is a moral issue. It certainly is not a party political issue. For that reason, I have sought not to make a party political speech. The Minister might well ask how one could make a party political speech. After all, both Tory and Labour Administrations have made critical decisions that have had a severe and distressing impact on the Maralinga Tjaratja. My hon. Friends must be reminded of the fact that it was Prime Minister Clement Attlee who, by way of a telephone call to federal Prime Minister Robert Menzies, sought and obtained authorisation for the creation and establishment of this atomic bomb test site. In 1968, it was a Labour Government who made what with 1993 hindsight can be called the erroneous claim that matters had been put right. It was also a Labour Government who prepared the way for the 1979 accord which said that things were all well and good in the area.

Late last year, Archie Barton wrote a letter to Viscount Cranborne, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence: He said:

"Dear Lord Cranborne,

Thank you very much for agreeing to see the delegation from the Maralinga Aboriginal Community and our solicitor on Friday 25 September . . .

My delegation is looking forward to meeting you to discuss the problems facing the Maralinga people arising from the residual radioactive contamination on the Maralinga lands from the British Nuclear Tests, and in particular:

(1) the deep concern of my people at the delay in resolving outstanding questions between the Australian Government and your Government relating to the funding of the clean-up of our lands.

(2) matters of common interest to the Maralinga people and the British Government relating to the future clean-up of the lands and including:

—the views of the Maralinga people as to the most appropriate clean-up;

—the use which my people can make of the rehabilitated land and test site facilities after the clean-up has occurred."

I sincerely hope that there will be no more procrastination or prevarication in the negotiations between our Government and the federal Government. I shall be delighted when the Australian and United Kingdom Governments agree to make fair and reasonable contributions to the overall cost of a comprehensive clean-up of the site. Account should also be taken of claims for compensation by the Maralinga people for the lands which they accept cannot be cleared up.

When I and my parliamentary colleagues visited the site, we were not allowed inside the fence as we did not have the necessary apparatus to protect ourselves. Even though that site is a very small part of the hugh area of 76,000 sq km, it is extremely important to the people of Maralinga Tjarutja.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): In light of his visit to the area, does my hon. Friend know when there might once again be open access to the traditional lands of the Maralinga people, which have been contaminated?

Dr. Godman: I am not a technical man, as the Minister knows. Australian and United Kingdom specialists and scientists believe that a small area will remain contaminated for thousands of years. The aboriginal people accept that that is the case. The McClelland royal commission of, I think, 1984 confirmed that. Another investigation conducted by Australian and United Kingdom scientists made a similar observation. In any case, the parliamentary delegation was not allowed beyond the fence, and I was not going to argue about it.

Yesterday the Premier of the South Australian Government wrote to Archie Barton, and the office kindly sent me a copy of the letter. It is a short letter, and I believe that it is worth quoting, because it reveals the sense of involvement of the state Government:

"Dear Mr. Barton,

I am informed that your compensation claim to the British Government is to be brought on for debate in the House of Commons in the immediate future. I congratulate your organisation on your tireless campaign to pursue the rights of your people, and I reiterate the full support of the South Australian Government for your efforts. Let me assure you that I am committed to assisting the Maralinga people whenever possible in the pursuit of your claim. As you are aware I took the opportunity on my recent overseas trip to meet with the Under Secretary of State for Defence for the Armed Forces, Lord Cranborne, in order to reinforce the importance that the South Australian Government places on your cause. I trust our combined efforts will result in a successful resolution of your claim."

In conclusion, you will not be surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to hear that I hope to hear a positive response from the Minister. The Maralinga people deserve a

[Dr. Godman]

reasonable reaction to their eminently honourable, peaceable and civilised campaign—I believe that they deserve no less. The Australian federal election is out of the way, and the British Government, with the federal Government of Australia, now have a fine opportunity to settle the issue in the interests of those fine, decent people, the Maralinga people of South Australia.

2.16 am

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on raising this important and topical subject on the Adjournment tonight. I also commend him for the moderate tone that he has taken; I think that he accepts that there is no party divide on the issue, and that we hope to resolve it.

In my response, I hope to set out some of the history of the issue before dealing with the factors that the Government are taking into account in deciding how to respond to the Australian Government's request for a British contribution towards the cost of carrying out further rehabilitation of the Maralinga site.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, Maralinga is located in a remote and generally uninhabited region of the Nullabor plain in South Australia. It is about 1,000 km from the nearest major population centre at Adelaide. That is why the site was selected, with the agreement of the Australian Government, for the conduct of a series of tests and experiments as part of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons development programme.

The hon. Gentlemen referred to the fact that the Maralinga people had been moved out, and at this stage it is important to explain that that was Australian Government policy. The people were not moved to make way for a nuclear test site; they were being moved anyway, and once that had happened, the area from which they had been moved seemed an ideal site for nuclear tests. The decision followed a move already made by the Australian Government for other reasons, and that is significant in connection with the claims for compensation made by the Maralinga people.

In all, four atmospheric nuclear weapons tests took place in 1956, and several hundred more minor trials not involving nuclear detonations took place between 1955 and 1963. Most involved the release of short-lived radio-isotopes with no-lasting effects. A few, however, involved the release of quantities of plutonium, which is the primary cause of the residual contamination at Maralinga.

The use by the United Kingdom of the Maralinga site was originally governed by ad hoc arrangements between Her Majesty's Government and the Australian Government. The hon. Gentleman referred to Prime Minister Attlee and his conversations on that with the federal Prime Minister. But in March 1956 the ad hoc arrangement was formalised in a memorandum of arrangements, signed by both Governments. The memorandum provided for the clean-up of the test site to standards agreed by the Australian Government, once the test programme was complete. Accordingly, Her Majesty's Government carried out an extensive rehabilitation operation in 1967, known as Operation Brumby, aimed at reducing residual contamination to an acceptable level, assuming no permanent habitation of the area—the position that obtained prior to the start of the test programme. Following completion of Operation Brumby and a survey of the sites by a joint Atomic Weapons Establishment/United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority team, the United Kingdom and Australian Governments signed an agreement on 23 September 1968, which stated:

"The United Kingdom government have completed decontamination and debris clearance at the Atomic Weapons Proving Ground Maralinga to the satisfaction of the Australian government;"

and:

"With effect from 21 December 1967, the United Kingdom government are released from all liabilities and responsibilities under [the 1956] Memorandum of Arrangements save that the United Kingdom will continue to indemnify the Australian government in accordance with Clause II of [the 1956] Memorandum in respect of claims for which the cause of action took place after 7 March 1956 and before 21 December 1967."

The exception relates specifically to a limited class of claims for death or injury to personnel and damage to property.

The range has remained wholly in Australian hands since then, though the United Kingdom authorities carried out an operation in 1978 to repatriate 0·5kg of plutonium that was regarded as potentially recoverable. An exchange of notes in November 1978 following that operation confirmed that there was

"no question of the United Kingdom having any further responsibility to repatriate waste."

This exchange also expressed the United Kingdom's willingness to provide technical advice on further clean-up, should the Australians decide to carry out such an operation.

Since 1968, various surveys and investigations have been conducted by the Australian Government. In 1984, it appointed a royal commission to investigate the situation and propose further action. The commission reported in November 1985 and, among other recommendations, proposed that the sites be released for unrestricted habitation by the traditional aboriginal owners of the land after further clean-up, and that, notwithstanding the 1968 agreement, the United Kingdom should pay for such a clean-up. The Australian Government, in response to the royal commission report, appointed a group of experts, known as the technical assessment group—TAG—in February 1986 to examine options for possible further clean-up of the site. In accordance with the undertaking given by the United Kingdom in 1978, the group included two United Kingdom experts. We also provided two RAF helicopters to assist in carrying out radiological surveys of the sites. The National Radiological Protection Board also carried out some associated studies.

The TAG reported in November 1990 and set out a range of clean-up options, ranging from the erection and maintenance of light fencing and warning notices to the wholesale removal and treatment of large quantities of topsoil. The report also identified the possible broad costs of the options, ranging from less than £10 million to over £300 million, a figure to which the hon. Gentleman referred. A copy of the report is in the Library of the House.

Following publication of the TAG report, the Australian Government approached Her Majesty's Government in September 1991 stating their view that there was a need for further decontamination, that the

United Kingdom was liable for any clean-up, and requesting that Her Majesty's Government make a significant contribution towards the cost of further rehabilitation. The Australian Government also claimed that the United Kingdom had a responsibility to pay compensation to the traditional aboriginal owners of the land, Maralinga Tjarutja, for any remaining restrictions on access.

Since that time, there have been a number of meetings and exchanges between the Australian federal authorities and Her Majesty's Government to discuss the matter. This included a meeting in November 1991 between the responsible Australian Minister and my noble Friend, the then Under-Secretary for the Armed Forces. Both he and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, to whom the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred, have met representatives of Maralinga Tjarutja to hear their particular concerns. There have also been meetings with representatives of the Government of South Australia, within whose territory Maralinga lies. We have stressed that we see this as a matter between Her Majesty's Government and the federal Government, rather than the state Government.

The current position at Maralinga is that about 3,000 sq km of uninhabited land around the former test site remains subject to restrictions on access imposed after Operation Brumby. The hon. Gentleman confirmed that because he was not allowed into the area. This represents about 4 per cent. of the 76,000 sq km of traditional Maralinga Tjarutja land. The TAG report identified about 100 sq km—about 0·1 per cent.—of the Tjarutja lands as being contaminated to the extent that exposure for continuous occupancy would result in an annual radiological dose of 5 milliSieverts or more. Exposure to 5 mSv gives an annual risk of one in 10,000 of contracting a fatal cancer. It is worth pointing out that the average lifetime risk of an Australian contracting cancer is about one in four. It is worth mentioning that the inhabitants of Cornwall regularly receive an annual dosage of 8 mSv arising from natural background radiation. If the hon. Gentleman had gone through the fence and into the area involved, he would not have been in any greater danger than if he had not been in Australia at all but in Cornwall.

Clearly, those are factors which need to be taken into account in deciding whether further decontamination is required. This is a matter for the Australian Government, as is the option for clean-up which is selected. Our understanding that a middle-range option from those identified in the TAG report has been selected by the Australian Government. This would involve the treatment of some 2 sq km of the test area, the reburial of some waste material and the erection of light fencing. The indicative estimated cost of this is about 100 million Australian dollars, or about £50 million. We also understand that, in pursuance of their case for compensation, Maralinga Tjarutja have claimed the sum of 45 million dollars, or about £22.5 million.

That is the background and history against which the issue has developed. The Government have made it plain on a number of occasions that it is their view that our obligations for the decontamination of the Maralinga site were fully discharged after the clean-up carried out in 1967. That was formally recognised in the 1968 agreement to which I referred earlier. We also firmly believe that any question of providing compensation for the aboriginal population is not a matter for Her Majesty's Government. The Australian Government are well aware of our position, and it is against that background that we have been studying their request for a United Kingdom contribution for further clean-up. The Australian case has raised a number of complex and detailed technical and legal points which have required study and research by my Department's nuclear and legal experts.

That process has been completed and Ministers are now considering what substantive response should be made to the Australian Government. A final decision has not yet been made, but we hope to be in a position to make a full response shortly. Clearly, that response will need to take into account the real concerns which the hon. Gentleman and others have raised about such contamination as remains at Maralinga. We are keen to resolve the issue as soon as possible. I am confident that the excellent relationship which we enjoy with the Australian Government as close friends and allies will enable us to do so.

It is necessary to take into account some of the other points which I raised earlier: first, the site is very remote and was deliberately chosen for that reason; secondly, the absolute risk to health, even without further decontamination, is slight; and, thirdly, the United Kingdom has already cleaned up the site once to the satisfaction, confirmed in writing, of the Australian Government.

In summary, the Government fully recognise the anxieties expressed by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow and others, both in the United Kingdom and in Australia, about the condition of the former test sites at Maralinga. We are examining the case made by the Australian Government for a United Kingdom contribution to further rehabilitation. We have listened carefully to the particular anxieties expressed by the Maralinga Tjarutja about access to their traditional lands. We recognise that, as the hon. Gentleman said, it has taken some time to respond fully to the Australian request. But the hon. Gentleman and others can be assured that that reflects the care with which we have addressed this complex issue.

Post Office

2.30 am

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I ask the leave of the House to speak for a second time this evening, as indeed have two Opposition Members. I hope that the House will be as kind to me as we were to the hon. Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

First, I pay tribute to all those who work for the Post Office. One of the highlights of my annual political year is going every Christmas to see those who work at the Golders Green sorting office. They are among the most friendly and hardworking of people. They have to work the most anti-social hours, but they are for ever cheerful. They are well regarded by those to whom they deliver letters. They also seem to have a good political bias, because most of them tell me that they vote for me.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): They would, wouldn't they?

Mr. Marshall: Constituents do not always say that when one talks to them. I am sure that, even in Greenock and Port Glasgow, they do not always tell the Member of Parliament that they vote for him.

The Government have already privatised part of the Post Office which they inherited in 1979. I want to talk about Post Office Counters Ltd and the Royal Mail. The Government have already developed some franchised offices of Post Office Counters, instead of Crown offices. In my observation, that has frequently led to several advantages. The first is that the hours of opening of the franchised operations are often longer than those of the Crown offices. I do not think that there is a Crown office in the country which opens after 1 pm on a Saturday. The franchised operations almost all open on Saturday afternoon and later at night than many of the Crown offices. Those longer hours are obviously much more convenient for the customers than the rather restricted hours that Crown offices offer.

The second advantage of franchised operations is that they offer a wide range of goods for the customer. In my constituency there is a franchised operation in Temple Fortune. The lady who runs it, Mrs. Lim, offers a much wider range of goods. She sells cards, stationery and other things which previously would not have been sold when it was a Crown office. She has transformed a neighbourhood post office into much more of a neighbourhood convenience store.

Earlier today—in the parliamentary sense—I entertained some constituents for tea in the Pugin Room. They talked about the former Crown post office in Lyttleton road in my constituency, which has been transformed by being made into a franchised operation slightly further along the road. They said that they now received a friendly service. The person who runs the post office recognises all the customers by name. If they turn up slightly after closing hours, he is still open and will still serve them. They get a much better deal from him than previously from the Crown office. Another post office in my constituency used to have a big mausoleum of an office above it. When it became a franchise operation, the franchisee said that he did not need the office and could let it out to someone else who could use it and provide jobs.

We have found that when offices are franchised there is frequently a hell of a row in advance, because people in Britain do not like change, but once that change has happened they recognise that the new office is giving an even better service than was given before, and it is to the advantage of all those who use that operation. If Post Office Counters were to stay indefinitely in the public sector, it would, I believe, face a gentle decline and find it very much more difficult over the years to continue to offer the sort of service that people expect.

One of the major forms of activity at present is paying out pensions and child benefits to claimants, but I believe that increasingly people will not want to go to the post office and collect the cash; they will want the money paid into their bank accounts. After all, it is only relatively recently that wage earners have received monthly payments into their bank accounts rather than weekly cash payments. If we expect people now to get their wages and salaries paid into their accounts, we should not be surprised if pensioners and mums want their social security benefits paid into their bank accounts rather than having to collect them in cash every week. There is also a perfectly sensible security argument for encouraging that. If a lot of cash is kept in a post office, it is much more likely to be the subject of a raid by robbers than if there is somewhat less cash there.

We have to recognise that the service provided by Post Office Counters to its customers will be very much better if the offices go into the private sector than if they stay in the public sector. If they stay in the public sector, the range of choice that they offer will not be increased, whereas if they go into the private sector they will offer a better choice and longer hours of service to the customer, and eventually they will create many more job opportunities for those who work in them, and offer much more sustainable jobs.

We should also look at some of the Crown offices which occupy wonderful sites in main high roads. Under the present financial arrangements, if the Post Office redevelops those sites, the money flows straight back to the Treasury, so there is no financial incentive for the Post Office as currently constituted to earn the property profits that it might well be able to earn if it were in the private sector. It also sometimes lacks the property expertise. There is an unanswerable case for all the Crown offices to go into the private sector, where they will thrive as small businesses with an entrepreneurial skill and flair that they often lack at the moment.

With regard to the Royal Mail, I listened earlier this week to the "Today" programme, or whatever it is that the BBC churns out at 6.15 in the morning, and the views of the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) who, like all Liberals, has missed this Adjournment debate and every Adjournment debate before it—one wonders where they are. Perhaps the rail strike has sent the hon. Gentleman to Cornwall; that will no doubt be the excuse.

Listening to the hon. Member for North Cornwall talking about the potential impact on the quality of service of the possible privatisation of the Royal Mail, one had to sit back—if one can sit back at 6.15 in the morning—and wonder if we had not heard all this before. Was it not the sort of nonsense that we heard when British Telecom was being privatised in the early 1980s? We were told then that the quality of the payphone service would only get worse if it was privatised.

What happened? Payphones did not work very well in 1983, but today there are many more payphones and

virtually all of them work. Those who say that if we privatise the Post Office and the Royal Mail the quality of service will decline should consider the example of British Telecom. The fears that were expressed when it was privatised turned out to be groundless. Rural telephone services have thrived, just as rural post offices would thrive under privatisation. The overall quality of service supplied by British Telecom has improved.

Similarly, those who run the Post Office believe that there is a case for increasing the level of investment in it. Mr. Cockburn who runs it would like to increase his investment substantially, but I fear that so long as the Post Office remains in the public sector the level of investment will be artificially held down. Privatised industries can increase their investments as soon as they are released from the financial constraints of the Treasury and are able to raise money on the international capital markets.

I remember listening to debates in 1988-89 about privatisation of the water industry. We were told that the industry needed more investment and therefore should stay in the public sector. One might say that argument did not hold water. As soon as the water industry entered the private sector, the level of investment increased, as it did with British Telecom. There has been a 50 per cent. increase in investment in the water industry and a magnificent increase in investment in British Telecom. In Cable and Wireless we have seen investment in a service designed to compete with British Telecom. That would never have happened if both companies had remained in the public sector. The answer to those who say that the Post Office needs an increase in investment to become more competitive and efficient must be to remove the postal services from the state sector and put them into the private sector.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the hon. Member accept that the new chair of the Post Office, Mr. Heron, in his evidence to the Select Committee only a few days ago, drew attention to the need for his investment programmes to be free of the present restrictive controls that the hon. Gentleman is rightly criticising? He also said, however, that formulations other than privatisation could give him freedom of investment and access to the capital markets. The hon. Gentleman may be in favour of privatisation, but does he accept that there are other options which would give the Post Office its freedom of investment?

Mr. Marshall: It is terribly easy for those who run a nationalised industry to say that there are other ways to raise money while remaining in the state sector, but we have to consider the Government's borrowing requirement. If the Government were to let rip with the Post Office and introduce some new, ingenious system of financing which meant that they could give it more money, that would not do very much for international confidence in Britain or for confidence in the City and elsewhere in the Government's financial policies. The only effective way to achieve a substantial increase in investment in the Post Office is to put its services into the private sector.

In a labour-intensive business such as the Post Office, it is important to look at the record of productivity. Productivity growth in industries which have been privatised, such as British Steel, British Telecom and the electricity and gas industries, improved massively once they were in the private sector. If we were to apply a similar test to the Post Office, we would find that productivity would increase substantially. Of course we shall be told by existing management that it cannot be done; that is what they said about British Telelcom and British Steel—but as soon as they got into the private sector it was done.

Mr. Cousins: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the evidence, which is attested to by accountants and certified in every way possible, proves that in the past five years productivity in the Post Office, under its existing management, has already increased by 30 per cent.?

Mr. Marshall: It is nice of the hon. Gentleman to point out that under the Government productivity in the Post Office has increased significantly. I thank him for doing that. If one looks at other industries which have already been privatised, however, their record of productivity growth has been even more rapid. I cannot believe that there is not significant scope for increasing productivity still further in the Post Office, given that it has been in the state sector for such a long time.

The opponents of privatisation will ask, "What about pricing?" The history of privatisation has shown that the regulators are even more effective than Ministers in controlling prices. The person who controlled Sir Denis Rooke was not a Minister with responsibility for fuel and power, or the Secretary of State for Energy, but Sir James McKinnon of Ofgas. The regulators are much more likely to be successful at screwing down prices than any Minister, even my hon. Friend the Parliament Under-Secretary of State for Technology, who has appeared diligently this evening to answer the debate.

The life blood of economic progress is a free market economy, based on strong competition. The Post Office is particularly fortunate in the sense that it has been almost absolved from competition. My hon. Friend the Minister should consider the competitive barriers erected against those who seek to compete with it. The private couriers who seek to compete with the Post Office for the dispatch of goods overseas find that, unlike the Post Office, they pay value added tax. I am not suggesting that VAT should be imposed on postal services, but the Government should consider such unfair competition and bias in favour of the Post Office.

My hon. Friend should also consider the restrictions on price competition. Potential competitors with the Post Office must charge a minimum price four times greater than the price of a first-class stamp. It should not be too difficult to remove that barrier quickly.

I apologise to my hon. Friend and to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) for keeping them up, but the issue is an important one. The Post Office serves every household and it would serve people and industry more efficiently if it were in the private sector.

2.47 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), not so much on his ill luck in ending up with this time of night for the debate, but on having such a debate. I congratulate him on his excellent judgment in choosing a topic on which debate is long overdue.

The last time that the Minister and I engaged in such a debate was at a similarly unfavourable hour. I then asked him when we might expect the results of the Government's

[Mr. Jim Cousins]

review of the Post Office. He replied—he will put me right if I give a false impression of it—to the effect, "We've had the Post Office for 350 years, so, if we take a lot longer, it won't really matter." At the time, and given my sunny and jovial disposition, I did not contest that proposition. With hindsight, however, I should have done, because the Government have dithered and delayed on that review for far too long.

Hon. Members will recall that, on 15 July 1992, the Government announced to Parliament their intention to privatise Parcelforce. The hon. Member for Hendon, South did not occupy himself with that matter, and I understand that. However, it is an important part of the Post Office's activities. On 9 July 1992, after Parliament had gone into recess, the President of the Board of Trade chose to announce by press release his intention for a wide-ranging review of all the Post Office's activities, including the possibility of privatisation.

When we debate the subject again, the House may want to recall that the Government did not choose to make that announcement to Parliament, but, in a cavalier fashion, chose to make it when Parliament was in recess and to do so in the form of a press release. Over an important issue of this sort—I share the views of the hon. Member for Hendon, South about its importance—it was unfortunate and wrong that the Government should have chosen to make the announcement in that fashion, rather than in the form of a statement to Parliament.

What is still more worrying is the fact that no report has yet been given—from 29 July to the present day—about the course, progress, options or more precise details of the matters that are covered by that wide-ranging review of the Post Office. That shows a great disregard for the significance of the issue and it is a further discourtesy to Parliament. The time is long overdue for the Government to come clean about their views on the matter, and to end the muddle and delay that have set in. In the hearing in front of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, to which I have already referred, the chair and the chief executive of the Post Office both described the difficulties that that fact was causing in the management of their business.

The Post Office is not a dead, fixed institution. Its activities, and the way that they are organised, are constantly changing and being adapted. There is always the possibility of new services developing. The hon. Member for Hendon, South took the view that the Post Office was not subject to competition, but clearly it is—both to competition at home and, importantly, abroad. At the same time as the Post Office review has been taking place, there has been a discussion within the European Community of the liberalisation of postal services markets throughout Europe. The Government have never reported back to Parliament on the progress of their review of the Post Office in Britain and, as a consequence, they have not reported back to Parliament on the progress—and their own view—of the liberalisation of postal services markets as part of the developing single market of the European Community. Both those matters are the source of great concern.

It was made entirely clear to members of the Select Committee—of all parties—that the delay and uncertainty were causing the Post Office's investment programmes to be thrown into some confusion. It was made clear that the Post Office's posture on the development of new services was being frozen and delayed. It also became obvious that it was being made impossible for it to develop a proper, commercial reaction to competitive pressures—both the existing ones and those that will soon develop when there is a single market for postal services—because of the Government's failure adequately to determine the matter.

The issue does not rest there. The President of the Board of Trade has given some comments—not to Parliament, but to Radio 4. He gave them not at 6.15 am, but at the far more gentlemanly hour of the lunchtime Radio 4 news programme.

I have here a transcript of the remarks made by the President of the Board of Trade on 1 February to the Radio 4 lunchtime programme. He referred to his press release of 29 July, which was just over six months' behind him. Therefore, in those remarks, he is reporting and rehearsing the product of six months—an enormous time in Government terms—of systematic investigation of the Post Office review, and commenting with the benefit of over £500,000 of private professional advice that had been obtained from a variety of sources, including Kleinwort Benson, Price Waterhouse and KPMG Peat Marwick.

Incidentally, in a parliamentary answer to me, the Government made it clear that that advice is not to be shared with Parliament. I hope that the Minister will give us some assurance that when the review is finally concluded, and the Government's preliminary proposals are made known, the House will be able to share in a scrutiny of that advice. That would be part of the trend towards openness in government, which we welcome. The President of the Board of Trade is making known publicly his advice on other matters, and it is important that he should make it known to Parliament on that matter as well.

He said when asked whether he was still consulting:

"The position is precisely that and I have not taken any decision myself as to where we move from there. I haven't got papers actually in front of me that I could put to colleagues. Colleagues have therefore not been consulted or involved in that process and my preoccupation is to make it absolutely clear that whatever we do there will be a nationwide delivery network with delivery to every address and that there will be a uniform and affordable structure of prices with a nationwide network of post offices. That is what I said at the time. We are looking at options and when The Post Office and my officials come to me I will decide what I think should be the next step."

After six months, and a comprehensive invitation of views and opinions from a wide variety of sources, after the expenditure of £500,000 of public money on private professional advice, we have the poor President of the Board of Trade patiently waiting for the Post Office and his officials to come to him so that he can decide to make up his mind about the issues involved in a process that he launched. That is not good enough. The time has long since gone when the President of the Board of Trade should have formed some opinion about those matters.

It may be that forming an opinion about those matters is not as simple as or uncomplicated as the President might have supposed when he set out on that review. In that case, he must be in a position to come back to Parliament, and if he cannot determine an exact course of action on those matters, he should at least set out a range of coherent alternatives from which he proposes to choose. Those difficulties, the range of the choices, appeared, perfectly properly, in the speech of the hon. Member for Hendon, South. He said that there was the possibility of franchising

some of the activities, most specifically in the context of Post Office Counters Ltd. He spoke of privatising—whatever that may mean—the Post Office. It was not clear whether he meant that it should be privatised as a single entity or separate ones—as counters, parcels and Royal Mail. The franchising process to which the hon. Gentleman drew attention seemed to imply that there would be an entity that would act as the franchiser of the franchised services.

These are all practical matters. All the time, sub-post masters and mistresses, new and old, are investing their money in property and facilities and in buying the right to operate post offices when there is uncertainty about what the Government intend for the organisation of the various services. The uncertainty was not resolved after six months, on 1 February, and now over eight months have passed since the review process was set in hand.

We hear rumours. We are told that the Under-Secretary flits about interested Conservative Members presenting a variety of fantastical, chimerical and labyrinthine possibilities. He goes this way and that. The hon. Gentleman is becoming a member of the no-coming-forward group.

The world shares in the fruits of some of the Minister's discussions. Rumours of the Minister's latest idea for the mechanics of the privatisation of the Post Office seep out. Wondering people receive the tiny scraps of information, sometimes with interest and usually with amazement. That is not the way to proceed.

We are talking about more than a state-owned operation. Through Post Office Counters, there is an operation that involves tens of thousands of sub-post masters and mistresses, who are business people and property owners. They have their own small investment programmes. They are not included in the external financing limit, I know. Their programmes are usually with their banks. It is not right, fair or proper that these tens of thousands should still be in a state of uncertainty, awaiting the next insight into what the Government's thinking might be by third, fourth or fifth hand from bits of information that leak out from Government circles.

The time has come for the Minister to declare at least part of his hand. We are talking about more than the potentially global competitive business that we have in the Post Office. The hon. Member for Hendon, South has thrown doubt on its record of commercial success and productivity, but I hope that he agrees that the Post Office is accepted among the public postal services operators of Europe as being by far the most efficient. It is also by far the most cost effective. It is recognised that it offers the best deals on prices.

There is a huge possible postal market. If the Post Office were free to do so—if it were unshackled from the EFL and knew where it stood within the Government's policies—it could become an extremely important and rapidly growing business. We should be planning its success in the postal markets of Europe, which would lead to success for other British businesses engaged in direct mail and publishing. Such businesses work in parallel with the business of the postal services. As I have said, these are important matters. There cannot be total uncertainty for much longer.

We are talking about a business with an annual turnover of £5 billion. It has net assets of more than £2 billion and it employs 200,000 people. It has operated free of subsidy. We are at the start of the 18th year of subsidy-free operation of the Post Office. Far from the Post Office being a burden on the Government, the Government, in their own expenditure planning, intend to increase the negative EFL by more than 250 per cent. in the next two years so that the Post Office will be expected to make, through the EFL system, a contribution of more than £350 million over the next two years to the Government's own accounts.

The Government have chosen to load at least £200 million of extra negative EFL revenue, and to raise that from the Post Office—when the Government themselves have not come clean on their own proposals for the Post Office and its operations over that period. No commercial operation could possibly succeed in that commercial context. The EFL system is not to be compared with a profit system. The EFL is declared in advance—a target set for the Post Office three years ahead of the turnover and commercial operations under discussion. That is a heavy burden to lay on the Post Office at precisely the same time that an open-ended review that has now lasted for more than eight months is in hand.

No sensible public service or commercial operation could reasonably be expected to perform in that kind of context. Even so, the Post Office is continuing to perform and to deliver what the Government want in terms of a negative EFL.

The new chairman of the Post Office, Mr. Heron, made it crystal clear that he does not consider his remit at all reasonable. He challenged head-on, and rightly, the working of the negative EFL system as it applies to the operations for which he is responsible. The Minister must pay some regard to that. If he cannot say where the Government are going with the Post Office review, at least he should respond to direct criticisms of the negative EFL system made by the Post Office's new chair—who described himself as living in a cash book culture that belongs more to the Victorian age. He made the point that that is not a sensible approach for an organisation that should be seeking to develop its activities, and to respond to possible new markets, competitive pressures and the huge opportunity presented by the single market for postal services with new investment programmes.

Mr. Heron made it clear also that a system that requires those investment programmes to be financed in effect out of revenue, which is the working of the negative EFL system, is simply madness.

The Government's autumn statement made it clear that it would be possible for public organisations to go to the private financial markets to raise their capital in a commercial way—yet the Minister made it clear that that new freedom is not to be extended to the Post Office. In the context of the position clearly adopted towards the negative EFL system by the Post Office's new chair, that aspect is one to which the Minister might well direct his thoughts.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South mentioned the use of the Post Office network, which is larger than the combined network of all the banks and building societies, and has more customers. He said that in future people would opt for the important part of post offices' business—handling the payment of pensions and benefits—to be dealt with by automatic credit transfer into their bank accounts.

Clearly that is a growing trend, which may develop as a result of the availability of choice. It is also clear, however, that the Government may well intend to force

[Mr. Jim Cousins]

the hand of those who are receiving pension or benefit payments for the first time, persuading them to choose cash transfer rather than payment through the Post Office. That would be a betrayal of those who operate the Post Office Counters network, most of whom are private business people rather than trade union employees or any of the other figures that the Government like to set up.

We must know the direction in which the Minister thinks the Government are going. Does he intend, by negotiation with the Department of Social Security, to allow free choice, or does he intend the Department—by means both direct and surreptitious—to structure choice so that business moves away from the Post Office Counters network?

We do not yet have the transcripts, so I cannot quote from them; but, when the Post Office's director of finance spoke to the Select Committee a few days ago, it was clear that his evidence did not make sense unless he was ignorant of any proposed change in the Department of Social Security's policy in regard to benefit payments through the Post Office network. It now seems, however, that all along the Government have had some plan—a cost-saving plan, perhaps, from their point of view—to structure choice in the way that I have described.

It would be interesting to know whether the Minister was party to the intragovernmental negotiations—whether he was aware of the possibility, or whether, like the Post Office's director of finance, he was operating on the basis that matters would continue according to the present trend, and would not be artificially twisted in some new direction.

I hope that the Minister will give us some idea of the Government's stance on a number of matters, some of which are also of concern to the hon. Member for Hendon, South. There is the question of social security payments through the Post Office network, and the negotiations with the Department of Social Security; there is also the question whether the private professional advice sought by the Government in the last financial year, at great expense, will be sought again in the new financial year on which we have just embarked, involving extra expenditure.

The Minister may not be able to tell us what the options are, but at least he may be able to tell us that there are options—that the President of the Board of Trade has emerged from the period of extraordinary passivity during which he has waited patiently to be told what to say by his officials and those of the Post Office. Have we passed that stage? Are there at least options on paper? Are the right hon. Gentleman's Government colleagues being consulted? How near are we to ending the current prolonged delay? It is not right in terms of parliamentary convention; nor is it fair to the business people whose lives are committed to Post Office services, or to the huge potential business in the Post Office.

The Government have already taken eight months over this matter. Therefore, the Minister ought at least to be able to tell us for how long the Government will allow interested parties, the businesses involved and the British people to mull over whatever conclusions the Government reach. The Government have already taken eight months. They may take nine months, or even longer. The period may stretch into the autumn, unless there is to be a press release the day after Parliament rises for the summer recess announcing the conclusions of the review, thus repeating the very unfortunate and wrong procedure under which the review was started. Will the British people be given an equivalent period of time in which to mull over the very complicated issues involved, so that they can form a proper view about whatever options the Government may put forward?

These are serious matters. We are not talking about a failed public enterprise which is dominated by militant unions, which has had no commercial success and no record of productivity. We are talking about a very important business which has a record of productivity and commercial success and whose operations are directly linked to the operations of tens of thousands of small businesses, which are a structural part of that public enterprise. Much hangs on the review. The time is well past, in every sense of the term, for the Minister to tell us about the Government's view on these matters.

3.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): I thank all those hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, south (Mr. Marshall) for making this debate possible and I join him in paying tribute to the staff of the Post Office. It is not often, despite the very long hours that we keep in the House, that we beat Post Office staff out of bed, but as we speak, at 3.16 am, the wheels of that mighty organisation are turning so as to ensure that about 60 million letters are delivered, most of them on time. We should be grateful to the 200,000 members of staff of the Post Office for the dedicated work that they do on behalf of us all.

Since no decisions have yet been taken on the future organisation and structure of the Post Office, I shall have to disappoint the hon. Member for Newcastle, Central (Mr. Cousins) and tell him that I am not yet in a position to announce what the future will look like. It is an important policy area and we are considering a number of factors. However, I should like to address the framework within which the Post Office, whatever the outcome of the review, will operate.

Some people argue—I note that this is the opinion of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South—that the Post Office should be changed, denationalised and demonopolised and that postal markets should be set completely free. They argue that this is the only way in which consumers can have real choice. Others are asking, however, why we are reviewing the Post Office at all. There are people who say that the Post Office should be left well alone, including—as one might expect—Opposition Front-Bench Members.

Mr. Cousins: I do not wish to be misunderstoood on this point. I made it crystal clear in my speech that we want the Post Office to be taken out of the constraints of the negative external financing limit system.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that. I am also grateful for the advice that he has given us on the workings of the negative EFL system. I take it, therefore, that he is one of those who accept that it was right of the Government to undertake this review. I shall be delighted to give way if the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene to say that we were wrong to do so.

Mr. Cousins: I am most grateful to the Minister. A review was certainly necessary in the context of the commercial possibilities of the British Post Office in the European Community, especially in view of the discussion about liberalisation of postal markets throughout the Community, but that need not have taken the eight months that the Government have already spent—and on the basis of what the Minister has said tonight, it seems likely that many more months will be required.

Mr. Leigh: This is a very complex matter. The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the current review. In fact, the Commission is working extremely slowly on this matter, which is highly complex. Its report is still in draft form. Given the complexity of the Post Office, an eight-month review is not over-long. We are listening to a very wide variety of views and are conducting a very thorough and careful study. I am sure that hon. Members recognise that that is the right thing to do.

The Post Office has made great strides in the last few years—certainly since my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South last raised the subject, in an Adjournment debate in June 1990. The House will want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the very close interest that he has taken in these matters and the great skill and knowledge that he brings to them.

I will reiterate why we are conducting a review of the future organisation and structure of the Post Office. As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said on 29 July last year. The Post Office is facing a period of considerable change. Post Office Counters faces growing competition in a number of its markets. Royal Mail no longer has a monopoly over express products and unaddressed mail. Its direct mail services face competition from other forms of advertising, and competition from the telecommunications sector is ever-growing. Indeed, there is a growing interest world wide in the potential advantages of freeing up postal markets.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Central informed the House about these new opportunities. The time has arrived to consider the potential impact of these changes on the Post Office and, in particular, whether its current organisation and structure should remain as they are. We have to pose the question: "Could the consumer and taxpayer get a better deal?" That is the whole purpose of the review. In short, it is not enough simply to rest on our oars. I am sure that, whatever disagreements we may have, we agree about that.

I must stress that, when my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced the review, he emphasised that the Government remain committed to a nationwide letter service, with delivery to every address in the United Kingdom, within a uniform and affordable structure of prices, and with a nationwide network of post offices. He said then, and I repeat now, that those commitments are not negotiable and will remain at the heart of public policy towards the Post Office. All the alternative ownership and structural options are being examined with this in the forefront of our minds. Any reform must satisfy those non-negotiable commitments.

With regard to Royal Mail, I should like to dwell in a little more detail on the non-negotiable commitments to which I have already referred: a universal letter service, within a uniform and affordable tariff structure. A universal service commitment clearly means a delivery every working day to every address in the country. Royal Mail will continue to provide this. Indeed, in most areas of the country there are two deliveries a day, so the commitment is currently not only met, but exceeded.

The Government are committed to an affordable uniform tariff structure. But what is a uniform tariff? Self-evidently, a uniform tariff does not mean that every piece of mail will cost eactly the same to send.

Mr. Cousins: Let me recap. We are trying to put straws together to make a house. What the Minister has just said is of some significance. Does he regard a second delivery each day—a unique feature of the British system—not as part of the universal service but as some optional extra that could be negotiated away?

Mr. Leigh: A second delivery is not available to all households in all parts of the country, but I think that the House is well aware what a universal service obligation means. We shall ensure that it is met.

I was dealing with the tariff structure, which is of interest to the House. Charges may vary with weight steps, and there are discounts for pre-sorting. What we mean by a uniform tariff is that we will not allow the Royal Mail to adopt any form of zonal pricing. It will cost no more to send the same article from the Scilly isles to the Shetland islands than it will to send it from Hendon to Golders Green. When considering the future of the Royal Mail, we asked how best we could satisfy the fundamental social concerns over universal service at a uniform tariff and make things better for consumers.

There are essentially three major issues for the future of the Royal Mail: the competitive structure, the regulatory environment, and the question of ownership. I shall speak briefly about each, as they have formed the main concerns for the future environment in which the mail services of the Post Office will operate.

We believe that the right competitive environment is essential for improving services to the customer, and we began the review with an examination of whether any market restrictions are necessary to ensure a universal service and a uniform tariff structure.

Some have argued that no restrictions are necessary —my hon. Friend may hold that view—that we should allow free competition to enable the most efficient operator to exploit economies of scale, and that we would still be able to offer a universal service at a uniform and affordable price. Indeed, I hear my hon. Friend make these points about the monopoly and argue that the only way to have a Post Office which is efficient and genuinely responsive to consumers' needs is to subject it to full competition. I am always keen to examine the potential scope for liberalisation, but I have to say that I do not think that full deregulation is appropriate here. Some routes would be inherently unprofitable, and a free market would not provide them at an affordable price.

I represent a rural constituency, and I am sure that the House will recognise that I of all people want to ensure that rural areas are not disadvantaged in the future. The Government believe that the outcome of such a free-for-all, at least for some users—I have in mind especially those living in rural areas—would be higher prices and a poorer quality of service. We therefore reject a free-for-all.

Others have argued that we should permit the entry of more than one firm into the monopoly area, provided that they also have an obligation to deliver mail to every

[Mr. Leigh]

address in the country. The argument here is that the efficiency gains which will emerge as a result of competitive presssure will be beneficial. This is theoretically attractive and is certainly not ruled out, but we need to be careful. There is a possibility that the loss of economies of scale, particularly at the delivery end, would lead only to higher costs. We must therefore consider these matters carefully.

However, I am certain that some increased competition is possible and desirable. The question then is what competition we can introduce while protecting the social commitments. We are already committed, as part of the citizens charter, to reducing the current £1 monopoly to a level nearer the price of a first-class stamp. My hon. Friend made a particular point about that. But what should the monopoly level be? Again, there are a number of views, and I am not in a position to say what we will do.

The second way of introducing competition into postal services is less direct, but may be just as significant in the long run. It is known, in the usual appalling jargon, as "downstream access". In the citizens charter, the Government proposed to extend the current range of discounts for users such as those who pre-sort their mail. Further discounts will be available to those who also trunk their mail to the final delivery office. Discounts might also be extended in the future to third party consolidators.

However, it would again be important to ensure that this did not weaken Royal Mail's ability to deliver the universal service and uniform tariff. I am sure that there are ways of introducing competition while still protecting the universal service and uniform tariff, and that is what we shall attempt to do, because it is only as a result of competition that we shall ensure that we get a better and better service.

To sum up on competition, we shall consider only proposals which do not in any way endanger the social commitments that we have made. We shall proceed on the basis of known effects, step by step. I reassure the House that we shall not introduce change for the sake of change.

Mr. Cousins: Clearly a major retreat is taking place, and it is causing the Minister some embarrassment. None the less, the retreat is in the right direction, so we welcome it. When the review is concluded, and the results are shared with the rest of us, will there still be options to be taken and resolved? Will the Minister have advanced and completed all those step by step stages that he mentioned, or will there be a concluded package? When the review is over, will there still be steps to be taken—backwards, perhaps, in the Minister's opinion—or shall we then have the final package? It is quite important for us to know that.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman's arguments are becoming somewhat Byzantine, even for 3.30 in the morning. The review is internal and we are considering all the options. We have long since made it clear—we made it clear in our manifesto—that we intended to introduce more competition into postal services. I make it absolutely clear again that that will happen. We said in the manifesto that we intended to set up an independent regulator to report to the Secretary of State—the President of the Board of Trade—to oversee that competition. There is nothing unusual about that, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not seem to think that competition in that form would be beneficial.

Let me make it clear that we shall not allow the future provision of the social commitments to be a simple act of faith; nor will we allow necessary restrictions on competition to be an excuse for the abuse of monopoly power. It is vital that we maintain a regulatory framework to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected. The framework in which the Post Office currently operates was structured in 1969. Some of the models that we have developed during the 1980s have shown that there are better regulatory regimes than the traditional nationalised industries model of the 1960s.

Before I go on to speak about the question of future ownership of the Post Office, I wish to talk briefly about Post Office Counters. My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South started by talking about that subject, and I know that he feels strongly about it.

In our manifesto, we gave a clear, unfettered commitment to a nationwide network of post offices. What does that mean in practice? It means that we are committed to maintaining a readily accessible network which meets the social industrial and commercial needs of the United Kingdom. Post offices and their customers throughout the country can rest assured that, whatever solution we adopt for the Post Office and its constituent parts, whether in the public or the private sector, that commitment will not be compromised.

Any organisation serving 28 million customers a year through a network of 20,000 offices—about twice the number of all the banks put together—clearly has major strengths in reach. But if it is operating in a series of low-margin businesses, not protected by any statutory monopoly, it must be constantly on its guard to keep its costs down and to respond flexibly as some of its products decline and others increase.

Post Office Counters is responding to the decline in some product sectors, such as national insurance stamps, by developing other business areas, such as stationery retailing, and it hopes to make use of its huge network to play an important part in the selling of national lottery tickets. We have recently given it powers to enable it to diversify into that business, which could fit very well with its core businesses.

I note what my hon. Friend has said about the ownership structure of Post Office Counters, and his view that we should continue the process towards full privatisation, which has been continuing for many years, but we need to consider how best we can equip the Post Office to develop new business in a rapidly changing world. Can that best be done in a public sector environment?

Of course, 19,000 of the 20,000 post offices are already owned and run by private business men, and that proportion will increase as the Crown conversion programme develops. I pay tribute to the 19,000 sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses whose commitment and hard work make it possible for the Post Office to continue to serve communities throughout the United Kingdom, even in far-flung rural areas where banks, building societies and most other retailers no longer operate. Our review must help us to determine what structure for Post Office Counters will best secure a bright future for those thousands of small businesses and protect the interests of all their customers.

On the question of ownership, we have to consider whether the competition and regulation framework we decide upon is more appropriate to a Post Office in the

private or the public sector. It will come as no surprise that, in general terms, the Government believe in the advantages of private sector ownership. Indeed, I believe our experiences over the last 14 years have clearly demonstrated the enormous benefits, both to the consumer and to the taxpayer, of transferring businesses to the wealth-creating private sector. I have noted the remarks of my hon. Friend about the experience of nationalised industries which have been privatised.

For the Post Office, it is important that we get the sequence of decisions right. We must decide upon a competition and regulatory regime and then consider the alternatives for ownership—again always applying the acid test of what is in the best interests of consumers.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central mentioned Parcelforce on 15 July last year, as he said, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced to the House that it was the Government's intention to sell Parcelforce. Parcelforce operates in a fully competitive parcels market. The majority of its traffic is business traffic. I believe that Parcelforce can flourish in the private sector. It has a distinctive brand image and a large customer base—strengths on which it can build.

We are currently examining the most appropriate method and timing for transferring Parcelforce into the private sector. It faces competition across a range of its activities. The vast majority of its traffic is accounted for by products sent to or from businesses, yet it offers a universal service at a uniform and affordable tariff, which we have pledged ourselves to maintain—another non-negotiable commitment.

We have been considering the future of Parcelforce alongside the future of Royal Mail and Post Office Counters, but our intention to privatise Parcelforce should not necessarily be taken as implying that the rest of the Post Office will be privatised. That will be decided on its own merits. Indeed, when my right hon. Friend announced the review, he made it clear that we would be considering continued public sector options as well as private sector options.

Before concluding, I should like to deal briefly with the views of the Post Office Board. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central made great play of the views of the chairman of the Post Office. As I understand his remarks in the Select Committee, the Post Office chairman made the point that a decision on the review was desirable by the end of the first half of this year. As the hon. Gentleman made clear, the Post Office Board has made no secret of the fact that it is seeking changes in the current regulatory structure. In particular, I note that the Post Office has said that it wants to be free from Government controls on investment and wants more commercial freedom.

I should make it clear that Post Office capital investment has been running at record levels over the last three years. External financing limits which we set last year were specifically designed to enable those record levels to continue over the next three years—some £900 million in total. That sets in context some of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Minister confirm that the Post Office's investment programme, comparing the current year, 1993-94, with the previous year, 1992-93, shows decline both in cash terms and in real terms? In other words, his assurance that the investment programme is being maintained is not borne out.

Mr. Leigh: Obviously there will be variations from time to time in the capital investment of the Post Office. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He regaled the House for 25 to 30 minutes with a description of the virtues of the Post Office. He said that it was the best in the world, the most efficient and all the rest of it. Has he forgotten that we have had a Conservative Government for the best part of 14 years? We have invested in the Post Office, we have ensured that it is the best, and we intend to leave it that way. We have undertaken a review to ensure that the Post Office responds to the opportunities, referred to by the hon. Gentleman, which are coming into world global markets.

In conclusion, this has been a valuable debate. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South is satisfied with the assurances that I have given. The review has confirmed our faith in the Post Office's ability to rank high among Britain's world-class, world-beating organisations. It will continue to thrive, break more of its records for customer service and pass on the benefits of ever greater efficiency to business and individual customers. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing the House to debate this important subject.

London Ambulance Service

3.39 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is with no pleasure that I introduce this debate about the relationship of Ministers and their accountability to the London ambulance service. The debate may well be important because it is a classic one for bringing Ministers to account. Although the hour is either late or early, whichever one chooses, our words are being recorded.

The London ambulance service is a tragedy which has focused on failure. The failure of the service was not surprising to many of us, unfortunately, as there has been a long period of decline, disorganisation, disintegration and, indeed, maladministration of a service which was once the best in the world. Alas, we cannot say that today. The decline in standards of public service which the LAS has experienced has been entirely under a succession of Ministers or Secretaries of State of one political persuasion.

I do not want to make too much of political differences tonight, although they may emerge in any investigation which takes place. I had hoped that, in this vital public service in which there can be no disagreement about the need for its presence and efficiency, there would be no difference. If there is a difference—a difference has, unfortunately, emerged—we must draw some bigger lessons from it, but not immediately.

We must draw some lessons from the vital matter of public accountability, especially when such a service is funded by the public and is run in any way other than as a visible public service. The emergency service at least is run in such a way. The service is run in such a way that its efficiency can be measured easily, yet there has been a most tremendous, tragic and, indeed, fatal failure.

Earlier, I said that the failure is not surprising to some of us. One of the reasons why I am both sorry and glad to have this debate is that I have followed the matter closely for more than six years. There have been seven debates on this matter since 1986, excluding all the debates that took place during the tragic dispute.

The first debate I remember was on 15 May 1986. It was raised by a Conservative Member—I think it was the hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt). I had Adjournment debates, to which I shall refer in a moment, on 31 October 1986 and 14 May 1987. There were Consolidated Fund Bill debates on 8 December 1987 and 20 December 1989. I presented a petition on 7 December 1989. There was an Adjournment debate on 18 April 1991 and a Public Accounts Committee debate on 17 October 1991 before I asked the Secretary of State for Health a private notice question on 28 October 1992, following the tragic collapse of the system on 26 October 1992.

In passing, I should ask how many debates have taken place about the London fire service. I do not recall any such debate. I wonder how many questions there have been about the London fire service. There have been few such questions.

We must ask ourselves why there is a difference between two services which are not dissimilar. One deals with property and the other deals with life. One would have thought that life and human suffering, distress and grief might have the priority of the two.

The London ambulance service has been a matter not only for debate. Hon. Members, including those who support the Administration, have sent letter after letter to Ministers. They have asked parliamentary question after parliamentary question. As I have just described, there has been debate after debate. However, as far as I can see from the evidence—the Minister may say something to the contrary—Ministers have not taken any notice. Indeed, the Minister who is present tonight, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), has not taken any notice, as I shall proceed to demonstrate.

I take Parliament seriously because ordinary people who pay taxes—however taxes are levied and whether they are fair or unfair—have no other means than Parliament of ensuring that the money which they collectively contribute is administered properly. This is the last place. It is either this or bullets.

Ministers not taking notice also reveals something else. Some time ago I read books about politics, perhaps idealistic ones, which said something like, "A wise Minister uses parliamentary questions as a searchlight to throw light on the nooks and crannies of every aspect of his or her Department." Unfortunately, the searchlight of parliamentary debate and questions in the past six years and even recently has been blanked out by Ministers.

Was it deliberately or through inefficiency? That question must be answered. I will try to answer it. If it is either cause, some action must be taken. That is why London Members signed an early-day motion about ministerial resignations. That is serious and I wish to say why, alas, resignations are necessary.

After that introduction, I intended my speech to have three parts. The first was the events that took place in the tragic run-up to the collapse of October 1992 and the events that some of us almost foresaw. The second was what happened after the collapse, and the lack of action by both the Secretary of State and the Minister. I do not know who was responsible. I suppose that the Secretary of State is responsible in the end. If the Minister did not tell her what was going on, he is responsible. So one of them is responsible.

I know that the Secretary of State and the Minister inherited a situation, but Ministers who inherit a situation have the opportunity and the duty to find out what it is and, if it is unsatisfactory, to do something about it. But, as I shall demonstrate in a moment, both the Ministers who are in office at present did not do so. Indeed, I believe that, although they have taken some action, it was not what is required.

The third matter is the action that the Secretary of State and the Minister did or did not take, subsequent to the inquiry report which was published a few weeks ago. This is the first opportunity that the House has had to debate that report. An unexpected fourth part of my speech is the events of yesterday. A ministerial statement has been made and letters have been sent from the Secretary of State to the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority, which I read about in the newspapers. I obtained the press release on application to the Library earlier today.

The Secretary of State may have sent London Members copies of the press release which have not yet arrived. Perhaps the Post Office, which we discussed in the previous debate, is not efficient. Certainly, I had to take my own initiative to find out what the letters said. Given that we were to have a debate on the matter tonight, that is a little surprising.

Before I embark on the history of the London ambulance service, I want to say something about the staff. I regard the ambulance staff of the London ambulance service as some of the finest people I have met, but they have been denigrated and criticised. In letter after letter and statement after statement, their alleged shortcomings have been made at least part of the excuse for what is going wrong.

I am very sorry that the Minister who is here tonight —I emphasise "the Minister" in his ministerial capacity, not as a Member of the House—was party to that. I do not know who served up that sort of information. I am not going to say that everybody is a saint, but I believe that the collective guilt that has on occasion been landed in the direction of the ambulance staff has no, or very little, basis in fact; certainly not the sort of basis that the Minister, in letter after letter, and the publicity machine of the administration of the ambulance service have implied.

The number of ambulance staff who reach retirement is not very great. The number of ambulance staff who have a very long retirement is very small indeed. You and I appreciate, Madam Deputy Speaker—indeed, I hope that all hon. Members, including Ministers, appreciate—the strain experienced by those emergency staff who have to deal with a succession of human grief and tragedy, not knowing what is coming next. By the very nature of their occupation, the strain is pretty great. It is difficult watching it on television sometimes when we know that it is real; we can only imagine what it is like when one is in the middle of it.

I regard the staff of the London ambulance service as professional Samaritans, and they must be given the tools for the job. I recall that, in interpreting that parable, which one hopes is still a basis of our society, one well-known person was heard to remark that it was very good that the Samaritan had some money to pay the innkeeper. What the person who made that remark forgot was that, in giving the money to the innkeeper, the Samaritan told him to do what was necessary for the man and he, the Samaritan, would repay him. He did not put a cost cap on it. In other words, it was demand-led, and that, until recently, is what the London ambulance service was.

Let us look at what has happened. Up to the mid-1970s, the London ambulance service, was, of course, run by the Greater London council, directly accountable to a committee and to elected members, one per parliamentary constituency. So any shortcomings on any matter relating to things that were going wrong could be dealt with verbally by members, or if necessary by letter to the chairman of the committee—all in minutes, all accountable; a monthly meeting at least, and discussed if necessary at a meeting of the council.

That was changed. I will not go into the details—it may have been a mistake; it may not have been—but things began to go wrong in the mid-1980s, in particular in the summer of 1986. That was when I first became involved.

I began to get heartrending letters from people who, by definition, were sick, and many of them elderly, and who had appointments at out-patient departments. We all know how many people go in and out of hospital pretty quickly these days and have to go back for out-patient treatment. Some of them will not get well. Those appointments were being cancelled because there were no ambulances. I do not mean the stretch-out variety; I mean the ones with tailboards and skilled staff. Many of the patients had crutches, and that sort of thing, so skill was needed. I have heard from the staff that it is not just the emergency people who suffer strain, because there are people up and down stairs and in and out of houses, and people who are very sick and have to be given assistance.

I wanted to find out what went wrong, and that was the subject of my first Adjournment debate, on 31 October 1986. It was replied to by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), a rather well-known personality, now on the Back Benches. I was astounded by the key sentence in that debate, which I will repeat. She said:

> "About 10,500 fewer walking patients were being transported—a reduction of 44 per cent. I am more than happy at that development."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 666.]

I nearly fainted when I heard that.

I shall make no further remarks about that particular former Minister except to say that anyone who has the opportunity to use someone who made such a comment should consider whether that remark was a qualification or a disqualification for public office.

I corresponded with the Minister and discovered that the justification for that remark was a belief that there had been abuse of the patient transport service, which was complementary to the emergency service. I believe that it is now put out to tender and that, in certain areas, the London ambulance service has lost to the competition. Heaven knows what will happen to the stability of the service if it comes up for tender every year, but I mention that only in passing.

When the then Minister said there had been abuse of the service, I asked for proof, both in writing and in parliamentary questions. Proof there came none, so I put it down to personal eccentricity. Those who know the hon. Lady—of course I told her that I would be mentioning her tonight—will know what I mean. The other reason she put forward with great eloquence during the debate and subsequently was that the patient transport service needed to be cut to keep the front-line emergency service, which she praised to the skies, running properly.

I believe that the general cuts were due to the Rayner study. A paper was published by an official of the West Midlands ambulance service and that was the beginning of a reduction in resources to the London ambulance service. It was cost-budget capped.

In subsequent debates, the excuse by Ministers was that cost capping was required throughout public expenditure. The Minister would argue that the Labour Government did that, too. That is arguable. However, whatever the arguments about the level of the patient transport service, the emergency service must be demand-led within the Orcon standard, which is well known throughout the country. It is essential to provide the resources to achieve the Orcon standard, which is, by common consent, a reasonable standard of service. That was not happening. The tap was being turned down and the London ambulance service was carrying deficits year after year. I tried with difficulty to find the accounts.

Then the Government had the effrontery to apply a 3 per cent. efficiency reduction. Organisations such as Sainsbury, Tesco and Boots do that to keep the management on their toes, and the Government thought they could apply value for money to that vital service. Of course, it did not work. There were difficulties about pay and so on until the tragic dispute—I use the word "tragic" advisedly.

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

The Secretary of State at the time was the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), who had started what I believe and what history will judge as a trail of destruction through the health service and the education service. Now he has been arrested—in the other sense of the word—by the police. We now have the promise of a police board for London to which I hope the current Home Secretary or any future Home Secretary will not repeatedly refer us, rather than to the Minister responsible.

In response to the White Paper "Working for Patients", published in January 1989, under the guise of the rather tenuous paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9, the South-West Thames regional health authority created the London Ambulance Board. Most people would not have a clue about who runs the ambulances in London—they might now, however, because of recent unhappy publicity. They were the responsibility of one regional health authority, which covers only a quarter of the London area and whose area, incidentally, goes well beyond London. The ambulance service was just one of its responsibilities. The money supply went down at about the time that the London Ambulance Board was created. Full members of the regional health authority had been on a panel managing the ambulance service and they were answerable to the Secretary of State.

During an Adjournment debate on 20 December 1989, the then Under-Secretary of State for Health, a most courteous Minister, who is not unacquainted with financial matters, made a remarkable statement about the London ambulance service, when he said:

"It cannot be financed as a demand-led service such as unemployment benefit or the prescription of drugs."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. 528.]

A doctor is free to prescribe drugs—apart from being subject to sensible limits that are set after certain procedures have been followed—but he cannot even prescribe an emergency ambulance. That is what the junior Minister for Health, the predecessor but three or four of the Minister now present, said in 1989. We were then cost-capping an emergency service.

I know that the Government have changed their view a bit since then, but only after enormous pressure. But even today, after the tragedies that we have seen in London, in some respects their view has not changed.

Things got worse. The poor staff were at their wits' end and they petitioned Parliament. On Friday 7 December 1990, I presented a petition on their behalf which had been signed by more than 300 members of the London ambulance service. It said of the dispute:

"the root causes of that dispute have not yet been addressed and therefore unless and until there is a full and proper public examination of the financing, organisation and operation of the London ambulance service there remains a great and continuing risk to the health and welfare of all Londoners."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 563.]

The petition also called on the Select Committee on Health to consider the matter, but, unfortunately, the then Select Committee did not do so. I helped to create the departmental Select Committee system and I deeply regret the fact that that Committee has postponed its study of the London ambulance service yet again. I hope that this debate will help it to reconsider that decision, because things went from bad to worse.

Between December 1990 and January and February 1991, we were back in the cancellation game. On Thursday 18 April 1991, I initiated a debate on several matters relating to the ambulance service. They included up to 10,000 cancelled out-patient journeys a month; extended response times to emergency calls, which were getting longer and longer; telephone stacking of 999 calls, which was becoming increasingly common, and the limit on ambulance crews to two hours voluntary overtime a week.

In addition, some 50 dedicated and experienced ambulance officers were made redundant due to the prospective privatisation of some of the service. An error was made in ordering a computer in 1991. An application was made for self-governing status—I know that that is more political, but it was a complicating factor because the patient ambulance service was to be subject to competition, which meant that people were worried about their jobs. The London Ambulance Board was invisible and virtually unaccountable to the London public.

The debate took place, another junior Minister was in the hot seat and none of those accusations or criticisms was questioned or dealt with. The only comment was, "We will do better." At the end of the debate—surprise, surprise—the Minister announced that £5 million additional capital had just been voted a week or two earlier by the South West Thames regional health authority, of which £3·5 million was for vehicles. If that money was necessary then, it should have been necessary before. In order to get the headlines on the accepted deficiencies, the Government threw money at them. But they did not necessarily provide money for more crews—just replacement vehicles and other capital equipment.

We were told that the provisions were due to the whizzo new chief executive, Mr. Wilby, who had been appointed by South West Thames regional health authority to make everything right. But the Opposition had had some contact with that gentleman—both on paper and in other ways. We knew that he was having to act on instructions cascading down from the Secretary of State—it was national policy. The Secretary of State appointed the regional health authority, which appointed Mr. Wilby—who was accountable to the authority. The authority also appointed the London Ambulance Board. Therefore, those involved were appointees of appointees.

If, in a private capacity, you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or the Minister wanted to see the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of Members, and were told that a meeting would be granted with the Under-Secretary, I know what the response would be. We had the same response; we wanted to see the then Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), but he would not see us and said that we must first go to see Mr. Wilby. We said that we would not because, politically, the Secretary of State was responsible. Some time later, I had a long conversation lasting two hours with that gentleman, in which we discussed his programme and his plans for executing it. I was not convinced at all by what he was saying, which did not add up in practical terms.

We tabled an early-day motion stating that the Secretary of State was undemocratic because he would not see us. We were going to tell him what was going on. Later, there were more delays, which became longer and longer and there were more and more reports. Last summer I wrote three letters—one to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health who is present tonight, and, in desperation, a third one to the Secretary of State.

The present Secretary of State is a well-known character who is always on the radio. She always looks as though she could join the ambulance service herself. I thought that she might be being over-protected by her private office, which is not unknown, as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will know. I took special steps to ensure that my letter to the Secretary of State of 4 September would be read by her. I shall not quote the whole letter, but parts of it. It said:

"Can you doubt that consequential long and unjustifiable delays in attendance over the Orcon standard of 14 minutes is and will cost lives?"

The letter continued:

"Apart from admission of inadequacies in electronic equipment, official statements from the LAS have concentrated on alleged absenteeism and a need to re-roster duties. However the Chairman of the London Ambulance Service will neither confirm nor deny my allegation to him that service is being cut by up to 20 per cent. reduction in overtime necessary to keep within budget limits."

In other words, budget capping was stopping staff doing voluntary overtime. I know that there is controversy about what is necessary over the weekend, but that concerns the national agreement.

Again, I went back to the question of demand-led service. I concluded:

"Will we have to wait until some celebrity dies after a delay of half an hour or more for an ambulance after a heart attack —as two ladies, now dead, had to do in Newham recently —before an enraged electorate discovers that contrary to their assumption resources for the emergency ambulances are not geared to the actual demand."

That was my third letter on the subject in that dreadful summer.

I had to wait 24 days for an answer. I had expected that the right hon. Lady, who is well acquainted with London affairs, for obvious reasons, to reply. Instead, it was the Under-Secretary, who is here to reply to the debate. I shall read some of his letter, which is dated 28 September. He said:

"The information the computer holds about ambulance status and availability may, therefore, be out of date. LAS is still, therefore, having to use allocated/despatchers to check out the status of the ambulances, when it would prefer those allocated/despatchers to be reassigned to call-taking."

That was a staff matter. The next part is the most important. He said:

"The problem currrently faced is behavioural rather than technical and lies with a proportion of the crews failing to use simple procedures to notify their status. The CAD system itself is functioning correctly at a technical level."

The crews were telling me that it was not. I said to Mr. Harris, whom I met that summer, "If you try to put this computer in, it might work, but it won't do awfully much for getting people to hopital better because of the lack of crews on the ground. Re-rostering, whatever you do with it, won't do the trick." I had hoped that the computer might work, but it did not, and we all know the result.

There was then this sentence from the Under-Secretary, who is another Derbyshire echo:

"The NHS, as you know, is cash limited. The onus is on NHS services to meet the demands made upon them, within budget. This cannot be achieved without good management and co-operation from staff. These expectations must apply just as much to ambulance services as they do to other elements of the NHS.

In the LAS we have the technical means and human and vehicle resources to make the emergency service demand-led in the only way that makes sense, that is that ambulances are sent, quickly, to everyone who asks for one. But we need the full involvement of staff in notifying their status and within a few weeks accepting new rosters."

Within a month, the whole thing broke down. The Minister apparently did not even look at the problem to find out what was going wrong—as it was, and as most people knew that it would.

What was worse was that, between January 1992 and the failure of the system entirely, over 40 delays were associated with death. I am not saying that there were 40 deaths due to delays. We do not know, do we? However, I wonder whether any of the 40 sets of relatives think that. I have a list here, which was compiled from local newspapers, of those incidents, which occurred before the thing went wrong. Irrespective of the computer failure, things were going wrong.

Subsequent to the collapse on 9 March 1993, a written answer from the Under-Secretary showed that, in June 1992, 90 per cent. of the calls were within 25 minutes, but 10 per cent. were after 25 minutes. That means that one in 10 ambulances called arrived at the scene 25 minutes or more after the call went out. That does not include the time that some callers had to wait listening to a recorded message. Instead, I am talking of the time from when the control room received the call.

The story becomes worse as it continues. I had asked for information about the number of ambulances that arrived half an hour after a call. I wanted to know the exact intervals. I am sure that the Minister, when he was a Back-Bench Member, would not have accepted what he wrote to me. Unfortunately, it is an answer that all Back-Bench Members receive from time to time. His response was:

"A breakdown of call response times above 25 minutes could be obtained only at disproportionate cost to the London ambulance service."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. *499*.]

As I have said, 10 per cent. of ambulances arrived at the scene 25 minutes or more after being called in June 1992. The service could not give a more precise distribution of the times taken for ambulances to arrive at the scene. The Minister had the neck to allow that answer to leave the Department. I wonder whether he asked the service why there would be a disproportionate oost. It shows that those involved were not on the job. How can anyone who is in charge of a London ambulance service be ignorant of the extent of delays of half an hour or longer? Of course, the Minister's answer appeared in *Hansard*.

The real answer came to me in a plain brown envelope. I suppose that my question had been spotted. My goodness, the ambulance people watch this place now. I was sent a clipsheet and a five-bar-gate form. The times in minutes are entered after the first response. At the end of the form there is "26+". The form starts with 0, 1, 2, and 3, and at the end of the page there is 26. In other words, the LAS records the number of response times after 26 minutes. If the Minister had obtained an answer to my question, the LAS would have had to go through all the forms, which of course would have cost a great deal of money. It is clear, however, that the service was not monitoring what it was doing. Is that the public administration and efficiency for which we are looking?

Some London Members had had enough. The report of the inquiry showed what had gone wrong so often. Early-day motion 1498 read:

"That this House deplores the absence of preventative action that should have been taken by successive Secretaries of State and their departmental Ministers subsequent to receive warnings".

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

We listed all the things that had gone wrong and said that someone should resign.

Each month there were 10,000 cancelled patient journeys. That means that over three or four months there would be 30,000 to 40,000 cancellations during 1992. That means 40,000-plus emergency service serious delays. But before things went wrong in 1992, what about 1991? Does that mean 80,000?

I tabled another question about overtime:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now make it her policy to ensure that all offers of voluntary overtime by ambulances crews that would fill gaps that would otherwise occur in the scheduled rostering are not subject to budget restriction."

The question was answered by the Under-Secretary as follows:

"All national health service providers, including ambulance services, must provide services within the resources allocated to them. It is for individual ambulance services to manage overtime levels within the overall staffing budget and to ensure that staff are rostered to provide services to the public."—*[Official Report,* 3 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. *172.]*

My goodness me! The Minister who let that by—his name is on the answer—is sitting on the Government Front Bench. This is accountability at work.

The delays are continuing, but they are fewer than they were because there has been some tightening up. The staff are keen and there is a new atmosphere. Why not let the service have the money to enable it to get crews out in ambulances, crews who are willing to do the work? I know that there are industrial relations problems. One reason for them is that the late Mr. Wilby—he is not literally dead, but he is as far as the service is concerned—would not meet people to discuss them.

It is about time to place all this on record—that is what Parliament is all about. There was an unexpected development yesterday as a result of the inquiry, which recommended certain actions. The Secretary of State wrote to South West Thames regional health authority requesting details of its plans. Yesterday, the Secretary of State wrote back to Dr. Marion Hicks, the RHA's chairman, and was pretty sharp in what she said.

The Secretary of State referred to the London Ambulance Board as something of an experiment and stated that the board and the RHA were

"unclear about their respective roles and responsibilities. Nor were they robust enough to respond to the computer problem facing the LAS. It is therefore right that you should replace them with a clearer and simpler set of arrangements."

I understand that the London Ambulance Board has disappeared in a puff of smoke. It was fairly irregular anyway—founded upon a couple of lines in a White Paper. I tried to ascertain its statutory basis in either the 1977 or 1990 Act, but was unable to do so. Perhaps the Minister can inform the House. It was one of those hands-off affairs, but that was Government policy—originally under the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe when he was Secretary of State for Health, and continued by successive Ministers.

If there was a lack of public accountability—clearly there was, because the Minister said so—that was the responsibility of the Government. Only a few years ago, a councillor in West Ham or East Ham in my constituency could have knocked on the council's door to find out why the ambulance service was not working properly. Now that has to be done in the House. What a way to run an ambulance service and a health service.

The Secretary of State's letter goes on:

"In the medium term, the aim must be to move the LAS towards Trust status as soon as possible, creating the normal pattern of accountability of an NHS provider."

I do not know what is

"the normal pattern of accountability",

but it is certainly not trust status—not for that sort of service.

The Secretary of State goes on:

"This means abolishing the Board and making the LAS Chief Executive directly responsible to the Regional Health Authority for all aspects of LAS management and performance."

I thought that that was what already happened. The board appointed Mr. Wilby and he tendered his resignation to the board. What was the board doing? Presumably the board resigned so that it could be trumpeted round the country that something had happened, when it appears that the board did not have much power anyway. It was a phantom board that was not in control. Mr. Wilby was in control, but hardly anybody else.

I tried to find out from the RHA whether the public minutes recorded anything to do with the LAS, but I do not think that there is much there.

The Secretary of State's letter continues:

"We both recognise that to make the new arrangements work will require thorough and rigorous public scrutiny of the LAS by your Authority."

That presumably means that the board of South West Thames regional health authority appointed by the Secretary of State will act for the public in scrutinising the LAS. I thought that public scrutiny related to elected representatives—whether in respect of borough councils, county councils or Parliament. How can appointed representatives scrutinise a public authority when they are accountable only to the Secretary of State who appoints them?

We have the Secretary of State trying to reassure us as recently as yesterday. The last sentence of her letter reads:

"I shall expect regular reports on progress from the NHS Chief Executive and will hold the RHA rigorously to account for its performance in managing the LAS."

I think that we should call Ministers to account for the way in which they have mismanaged things.

I was not going to say this before I read that document, which is now in the Library. Overtime is still being capped, despite two or three requests in letters and questions; a phantom board, which did not have much responsibility anyway, has resigned; and the Secretary of State talks about confidence. In, I believe, a press release, she said that there would be no more confidence in the LAS until the appropriate steps were taken.

I suggest to the right hon. Lady that there will not be much confidence until she changes her policy, or we change our Secretary of State. In early-day motion 1498, we asked the responsible Minister to depart. The Secretary of State and the Minister are both people of integrity, but I do not think that they understand the jobs of Secretary of State and Minister if they can write such tosh in an attempt to get off the hook. For years, thousands of people in London have been subjected to suffering, grief and difficulty.

I quoted from the Minister's letter. Either he did not find out what was going on—which he should have—or he

mentioned it to the Secretary of State and she did nothing. One of them is responsible, and for that reason one of them must go.

4.26 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): The London ambulance service operates within the national health service on the same basis as any other directly managed service. It is accountable to Ministers, and therefore to Parliament, through its relevant health authorities—in this case, South West Thames regional health authority.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): May I intervene before the Minister gets into his stride? He may be wondering why my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) is not in his place on the Opposition Front Bench. No discourtesy is meant to the House, the Minister or my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing); my hon. Friend's wife has been taken ill, and at the last minute I agreed to sit on the Front Bench. Of course, the rules of the House do not permit me to speak.

Mr. Sackville: I thank the hon. Lady, and ask her to pass on our sympathy to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

London has four regional health authorities, and four regions together fund the revenue and capital requirements of the LAS. The service is managed by South West Thames on behalf of the other three health regions.

All large organisations—the NHS is no exception—must operate through devolved responsibility, with clear lines of management accountability. Considerable management responsibilities are delegated to the appropriate levels of the NHS—regions, districts, family health service authorities and now trusts. Ministers are accountable for the performance of the NHS, but local management is responsible for ensuring that services are delivered. The front line of the NHS cannot be managed from the centre; it is the responsibility of the centre to see that services are well managed.

The medium-term aim for the LAS must be for it to achieve NHS trust status. Yesterday, a further 132 hospitals, community units and ambulance services achieved trust status. It is sensible to expect the LAS to achieve the same status as the great majority of NHS service providers. Until trust status is achieved, the LAS will continue to be directly managed by South West Thames regional health authority.

The recent report of the independent inquiry into the LAS identified management failures within the service, especially surrounding the implementation of a computer-aided dispatch system. The LAS has recognised that it must learn from the mistakes that have been highlighted and implement the report's recommendations if it is to achieve its main aim, which must be to improve its performance for Londoners.

As the inquiry report says, the best way, and the only way, in which the London ambulance service can regain public confidence is by making significant improvements in performance. Since the failure of the computer-aided dispatch system in October and the resignation of the then chief executive, John Wilby, performance has already improved. In the summer of 1992, a figure as low as 54 per cent. of crews were being dispatched in response to 999 calls within 14 minutes of the call being received. At the end of February, that figure had improved to 65 per cent. That is still below the patients charter standard, which is 95 per cent., and it is clearly unacceptable, but the achievements of the LAS since last summer, in particular since the failure of the computer-aided dispatch system in October, should be recognised.

The need for further improvements has been recognised by both the LAS and the South West Thames regional health authority. We should not underestimate the task facing the LAS in securing improvements in its service. When the planning of the computer-aided dispatch system began in 1990, a long and bitter industrial dispute had just concluded, leaving a legacy of very poor management-staff relations. Performance levels were poor. The LAS management had to work within that context to provide the improvements in performance which Londoners and Ministers expected to see.

Local managers are responsible for the day-to-day operation of their services. With respect to the computer-aided dispatch system, as implementation neared in 1992, the then LAS chief executive gave categorical assurances to the regional health authority that the chosen system would be introduced successfully and would contribute to improvements in performance. Given these assurances, the system was implemented. When it became clear that the computer-aided dispatch system had failed when it was reintroduced on 4 November, it was abandoned, and ambulance control reverted to a manual system. The chief executive of the LAS resigned and the deputy regional general manager was appointed in his place.

The system was introduced as a key element of the LAS plan to improve performance. The failure of the computer-aided dispatch system led directly to the independent inquiry, which was established to look into its failure and to make recommendations for changes within the LAS, in the light of its findings.

The inquiry report was published on 25 February. It identified several areas where the LAS must make practical changes to improve industrial relations, revise management accountability and reintroduce a computer-aided dispatch system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health reported to the House at that time and requested the regional health authority to report within one month with proposals on strengthening management accountability for the LAS.

On Wednesday of this week, my right hon. Friend announced the new arrangements for the accountability of the LAS which she has agreed with the regional health authority. The LAS had been managed by an arm's-length board, to which the chief executive was accountable. The board was chaired by a non-executive member of the regional health authority and had five non-executive members nominated by the four Thames regions. The LAS chief executive and other senior LAS managers sat on the board.

It is now clear that these arrangements left the members of the board and the regional health authority unclear about their respective roles and responsibilities, in spite of the fact that the individuals concerned worked extremely hard to make the arrangements work.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister said that the chief executive was responsible to the board. Was he referring to the LAS board or to the board of the South West Thames regional

[Mr. Spearing]

hospital authority? The accountability difficulties that the Secretary of State has now admitted turn very much upon that matter. Can the Minister clarify the point?

Mr. Sackville: The chief executive reported to the board, which itself was appointed by the board of the regional health authority. I agree that there is ambiguity about the extent to which the board was responsible and the extent to which it was advisory. That is precisely why the new arrangements making the chief executive of the London ambulance service directly accountable to the regional health board represent the proper way forward. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to identify the ambiguity in this relationship.

I believe that the regional health authority exercised due diligence in its management role through the annual review of LAS performance and the individual performance of the chief executive and through the monitoring of financial performance. However, the regional health authority has acknowledged that the arm's-length arrangement meant that some of the problems identified in the inquiry report were not being acted upon adequately.

As I have said, the relationship of Ministers to operational services is based on the principle of delegating responsibility for those services to the appropriate levels of management. It is important in this relationship, that, within the objectives laid down by Ministers, operational managers should have the freedom to use their delegated authority and actually manage the service.

Within that framework of accountability, the public and Ministers expect to see services delivered to as high a standard as possible. I take a very serious view of the failures highlighted by the inquiry report. My right hon. Friend has made known her determination that the mistakes identified in the report must not be repeated. Yesterday, she agreed with the regional health authority new arrangements for the management of the LAS.

The region has acknowledged that the previous, arm's-length relationship is to be replaced in May by direct-line accountability, for LAS performance, of the LAS chief executive to the regional general manager. This accountability will include routine financial monitoring, performance monitoring, the monitoring of complaints and untoward incidents, annual corporate reviews, individual performance reviews and the observance of regional health authority standing orders and standing financial instructions.

The LAS chief executive will attend regional health authority meetings, and progress reports will be submitted to the authority. These reports will be considered in public at authority meetings. In recognition of the fact that there is a need for more detailed scrutiny, in addition to the full RHA meeting, a sub-committee comprising senior directors of the RHA will be established. This sub-committee will be able to draw on advice from a group of external specialists in, for example, information technology, finance and human resources.

The advisers will advise the LAS directly, and will also have access to the regional chairman should they think that an issue is not being dealt with adequately through normal line management agreement. The LAS sub-committee minutes will be received and discussed at full regional health authority meetings. The regional health authority will be accountable to Ministers for the LAS, within the existing framework.

The virtue of the board was that it brought non-executive assistance to the LAS and gave delegated authority to the chief executive. The regional health authority does not want to remove authority from the LAS chief executive to manage the service. Interference should be kept to a minimum, and the balance of this continued delegation will be the objectives for performance agreed between the region and the LAS. These objectives will also be incorporated into the annual corporate contract between the LAS and the management executive of the national health service and will be monitored throughout the year.

The London ambulance service is not committed to producing an annual report concentrating on performance data and agreement against plan targets. The management of the London ambulance service, in conjunction with staff, are currently preparing an action plan, which will contain objectives for improving the performance of the service—improving management arrangements, reintroducing a computer-aided dispatch system, improving industrial relations and improving financial performance. More specific objectives will be agreed when the action plan has been finalised.

I am sure that hon. Members will welcome the increased openness of the LAS to public scrutiny. Regular copies of performance reports will be available to hon. Members, local authorities and interested public bodies. Emphasis will be placed on clarifying the contractual relationship between the four regional health authorities and the LAS.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, because I know that there is little time. He has not mentioned finance. Surely, half the basis of this issue is the petrol supply to the engine. The management jargon that he is using does not inspire confidence in me. Will he respond to the request that the budget be increased to cater for overtime? How is the future funding of the complex machine that he has outlined going to work? Will it be determined by the Treasury, the Secretary of State, the South West Thames health authority or at a meeting of the new panel?

Mr. Sackville: It will be determined in exactly the same way as in the 41 other ambulance services in this country: through contractual negotiations between the purchasers—in this case, the four regional health authorities—and the ambulance service. In that connection, the hon. Gentleman should compare the level of finance per 1,000 of population for the London service with the other metropolitan services in the west midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and so on. He will find that the financing of the LAS is very much in line with that of other ambulance services which are turning in performance figures of 90 per cent. and 95 per cent. against a current perfornace figure of 65 per cent. in London.

That is the nub of the argument. The resources are there, and we are trying to find out why there is a problem in London.

Mr. Spearing *rose*—

Mr. Sackville: I should like to press on.

The new arrangements are a first step towards restoring public confidence in the LAS. We recognise that that is the goal towards which we must strive. As the inquiry report pointed out, that will be fully achieved only by improved LAS performance. I recognise that considerable progress has been made since October, but a great deal more needs to be done. The new objectives for the LAS will be delivered within a time scale agreed by Ministers.

My right hon. Friend has also told the regional chairman that she will be looking to her and her management team to ensure that the main recommendations of the inquiry report are swiftly implemented and that the LAS begins to move as quickly as it can towards providing the quality of service that Londoners have a right to expect. A report will be published in the autumn, which will detail progress in implementing the report's recommendations.

I remind the House that the inquiry report stated:

"it is not possible to turn around LAS performance overnight . . . the public and its representatives must be prepared to allow the LAS breathing space to put its house in order."

We shall therefore guard against unrealistic pressures on the LAS, but we shall contiue to keep its performance under careful scrutiny. It is vital that the LAS should make sustained progress towards improving its service to the public. I believe that the arrangements put in place by the region provide the right framework to enable that to happen.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister is now talking about a policy programme. Let us deal with the emergency ambulance service. Whatever the merits of joining or splitting the services, the emergency service is quite different from the patient transfer service. How can a single provider, established and working, bargain with four different customers, only part of whose areas are within the LAS area, and come to an agreement? Surely the service must reach the Orcan standard, say how much it costs and then apportion the money more or less equally among the population of the four authorities. Is there any other way of doing it? How can there be bargaining about such a contract?

Mr. Sackville: It is happening across the health service. Health authorities are demanding a certain level of service and reaching agreements with providers on the price. As I said, the financing of the LAS is be no means out of line with that of other services. It receives more money than several comparable metropolitan ambulances services, some of which have performance figures that are way ahead of patients charter standards of 95 per cent. There is a great gulf.

I should like to deal with more of what the hon. Gentleman said. He has given us a long political history of the last few years in terms of contacts between him and Ministers, Adjournment debates and other such matters, but he has not tackled the question of what the fundamental problem of the LAS is, and what differentiates it from West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and other similar ambulance services in places with similar problems.

There is general agreement that there is a long-standing problem involving industrial relations in the LAS. I do not believe that there has been total co-operation between staff and management, and excellent performance cannot be achieved without that. We hope that the current arrangements will work towards such co-operation, but we all need to come out of the trenches, and those of us who may have been tempted to support one line or the other must meet in the middle and decide how, together, we can achieve the sort of performance in the LAS that almost every other ambulance service in the country is achieving.

The hon. Gentleman knows that the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority has invited him to meet the authority and to give it the benefit of his undoubted expertise and long interest in the matter. A letter written to him by Mr. Spry, the regional general manager, says:

"Professor Hicks and I have only been involved in the LAS for a relatively brief time. You have a far more extensive experience of observing the problems of the LAS. We believe that we could benefit from learning from your experience."

So far the hon. Gentleman has not taken up that offer, and he replied to the original invitation with the words:

"I thank you for your courtesy; it may be that you are not fully aware of the long period for which I have been involved in matters relating to the London ambulance service"

He also gave the fact that

"there may be other proceedings in Parliament"

as a reason for not meeting representatives of the LAS. I suggest that that is not a good reason for not meeting them. It would be most helpful if he would sit down with the chairman and the chief executive of the regional health authority and share his expertise and his ideas about what he believes is wrong. We have not heard many solutions from him tonight.

Mr. Spearing: I am extremely glad to respond to that request. But, as I made clear, I thought it right that the debate should take place first——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): No.

Mr. Spearing: Oh, yes. I hear a sedentary interruption from a well-known voice. The debate had to take place first because the people whom the Minister has mentioned, and for whom I have personal respect, are the Minister's appointees. They have to carry out a policy directed from Richmond house by the Secretary of State and the Minister, whose performance and conduct I have described—perhaps at length, but necessarily so. I shall be glad to meet those people after the debate, but it is right that the matter should be dealt with first in Parliament, where the real responsibility lies.

I conclude—I hope—by telling the Minister, if he has not already seen it, that I wrote a long piece of evidence to the inquiry, which is public, and an appendix on the need to set up machinery to determine the finance necessary to meet the Orcon standard. I should be pleased to meet the Minister, the Secretary of State or the chairman of the South West Thames regional health authority, initially to discuss my evidence and my constructive proposals within that evidence, which is now public; indeed, it has been public for some weeks.

Mr. Sackville: I cannot see why this debate in the middle of the night should have delayed the hon. Gentleman meeting the regional health authority in order to give it the benefit of his expertise on the subject. I hope that the meeting will take place soon. I extend an invitation to the hon. Gentleman to come to see me any time to give me all the information. Rather than chronicling his many Adjournment debates and his various contacts with Ministers over the years, he should give us some hard facts about what he sees as the solution to the problem. We all

[Mr. Sackville]

agree that there are serious problems with the service which are not shared by almost any other ambulance service. We have got to get together to decide what they are. Political posturing will not help.

Mr. Spearing: We want funds.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Hon. Members should remember that seated interventions are to be deplored.

Mr. Sackville: We must get together to decide what differentiates London from the rest of the country. If the hon. Gentleman has something to say, let him come and say it.

Retirement Age

4.49 am

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I propose to discuss an age-old problem—when are we officially old? In this age of equal opportunity and equal treatment for all, is it fair that a man can be deemed old at 65 and thus eligible for a state pension, but a woman is considered so old at 60 that she can skip a five-year wait and collect her pension then?

I have absolutely no intention of retiring at 60. That is barely 12 years from now. I must inform my constituency that I have every intention, barring illness, of carrying on working at least until 2017, by which time I will be a sprightly 73-year-old. Without giving away any secrets, I might point out that the House already has some splendid, lively women Members around their seventies. Like old soldiers, they show no signs of fading away, so hon. Members have been warned.

The reality is that we are mentally and physically delaying our aging process. We have better diets, healthier foods, more exercise and improved medicines, so much so that today there are 2,500 people alive who have celebrated their 100th birthday. A considerable number go on to celebrate their 105th birthday, and even their 110th. Most of those people are women.

Life expectancy for those born in 1841 was less than 40 years for a boy and 43 years for a girl; indeed, many children died in infancy. By 1941, life expectancy was 70 years for a boy and 75 years for a girl. I am happy to report that 50 years later there has been a dramatic increase. A son born in 1991 can expect to live to 76 and a daughter born in the same year will, on average, live to about 81 years of age. In other words, people born today can on average expect to live about six years longer than those born 50 years ago. That justifies the proposition that women form what I call the first estate. We are tougher, more resilient and more active. I should make another plug: we are harder-working.

Is it right, therefore, that women should be pensioned off at 60? The timing for paying retirement pensions has varied over the century. When pensions were introduced in 1908, they started for both men and women at over 70. In 1925 the age went down to 65. However, the pension age for women was lowered to 60 by the Old Age and Widows' Pensions Act 1940. The new inequality was a response to a campaign in the 1930s by unmarried women, many of whom had cared for dependent relatives for most of their lives. It also recognised the fact that, on average, married women were several years younger than their husbands. It must also be admitted that the Government hoped that lowering the age would be a sweetener to encourage more women to work in war factories. That was blatant sex discrimination, but the level has rested there for 50 years without change.

Today, the average woman is mortified to think of herself as old at 60, yet the state does. The time has come to think the unthinkable: raise our retirement age to that of men—65. It would be fairer and would not be breaking new ground, only restoring a former status quo.

More than that, the time has come to recognise that, with rising numbers and their survivability, women are putting an enormous strain on the rapidly diminishing working population which must sustain them. I congratulate the Leader of the House on having the

courage, when he was Secretary of State for Social Security, to raise the issue in his document, "Options for Equality in State Pension Age." He broke new ground by saying that the question today is not whether we should equalise the retirement age at 65 but how and when. The case is powerful.

The number of people over state pension age will increase significantly from 10·3 million in 1990 to a projected 13·3 million in 2050, peaking at 14·4 million in 2034. The peak in the number of pensions is caused by the aging of those born during the 1960s baby boom, which will lead to a corresponding increase in the number of people who will reach state pension age in the third and fourth decades of the next century. At the same time, the population of working-age people—the so-called support ratio—is expected to fall. All that will put added pressure on the social security budget, which is already the largest single item in public spending.

In short, can we possibly expect and demand that a much smaller work force should bear such a burden? Is it realistic to expect every pensioner aged 60 in 2010 to be supported by only 2·6 workers, whereas women, who are a much fitter generation now, would be supported by a wider and fairer spread of four workers if they waited until 65? As I said, the peak will be reached about 2030—I will be 86 and still going strong—and three people will be needed to support each pensioner, even at 65.

Let us turn to the European dimension. Our problems are not unique in squaring up to the matter. Others also have to adjust their state pensions. Many European Community countries have already moved towards equalisation. Germany plans to have a common pension age of 65 by 2012, when every pensioner will be supported by barely two workers. Italy will equalise at 65 by 2016. By that time, 2·4 workers will be needed to support retired people. Having gone against the trend and opted for retirement at 60, France has recently reopened the question.

We are all faced with the combined effects of low birth rates and increasing life expectancy which serve to slow the population growth rate and increase considerably the proportion of elderly people. In Britain, the proportion of people over the age of 65 is expected to rise from 14·9 per cent. in 1980 to 20·4 per cent. in 2040. In comparison, the proportion in France, which is starting from a lower base of only 14 per cent., is expected to rise to 22·7 per cent. in 2040. The proportion of people aged 65 or more in Japan will more than double in the next 40 years.

Some European countries have already seized the nettle. In Norway, the pension age of 67 applies to both sexes. Other Scandinavian countries and Cyprus have an equal state pension age of 65. Recognising similar trends, the United States has introduced a reform package to be implemented in stages between 1983 and 2027. Over the period 2003 to 2009, the pension age will increase to 66, and from 2021 to 2027, it will increase to 67.

There is more than one way of tackling the problem. We could use the much-favoured "flexible decade" system. But I do not believe that that is realistic. It sounds attractive. Everyone would be satisfied, so they think. People would choose their retirement age over a decade —say between 60 and 70 or 55 and 65. The attraction is that those who are fit and wish to remain happily at work until they are 70 or so would earn an additional pension when they retired. Those who wished to retire at the earliest opportunity would be able to do so, but clearly on less income. On that score, the system could create problems. I appreciate that Sweden operates flexible decade retirement, but Sweden has a different culture and a different social security system. It does not bear direct comparison with Britain.

Alternatively, we could reduce the male pension age to 60, in line with women. Or we could split the difference and opt for 63. Or we could raise the pension age for women to 65. It has to be said that 60 is no longer the most realistic option. It would cost the Exchequer at least £3·5 billion a year, at current prices. It would fly in the face of international trends, which are mainly upwards.

The choice facing us and the decision-makers is simple: either we give extra money to men by reducing the male pension age from 65, or we make savings from women by increasing the female pension age from 60. Equalisation at 63 brings neither joy nor tears. There is no real gain either way. The economic effects are pretty neutral and little would be achieved.

However, a common pension age of 65 would bring savings of at least £3·5 billion a year. That would be enough to cut 3p in the pound off income tax. That must be a mouthwatering prospect for our Treasury Ministers. My guess is that the common pension age of 65 would be the most attractive proposition. Not only will the pension age be fairer, but pensions will no longer be a drain on the economy. More than that, the common pension age could bring real dividends, ensuring that the released money could be diverted and targeted to those most in need, for example, the very carers who look after the frail and elderly. None of the other options remotely offers this remedy and help.

Such a programme, on a considerable scale, involving women born in the 1950s will take adjustment. It will take at least 15 years to phase in. The first women likely to be affected by the full impact of the change would have been born in 1954 and will reach the new pension age of 65 in 2019. The full impact of the change would hit women now under 40. It is not a programme to be launched in haste. It will have a fundamental effect on society. Many women will be delighted to be able to continue working on the same basis as men.

We spend all our lives seeking equal treatment and status. There is no reason why retirement should be any different. However, we should not forget to take into account the women who have spent years in low-paid work, from which they may not qualify for a retirement pension and who do not have an occupational pension. Perhaps they have heavy home caring responsibilities. Such women could be forced to seek income support before they reached the official retirement age. I know, from the feedback that I have had, that they would regard this as demeaning.

We should examine carefully how vulnerable groups would be affected. We should be aware of the women who could be disadvantaged. They should be protected and compensated where appropriate. Of course, the other side of the coin is that, with the decline in the working population, there will be more demand for senior citizens to work and be recognised for all their skills and experience. At long last, the "Oldies", as signified by the satirist Richard Ingrams, will have the last word. The able-bodied are vibrant, alive and extremely well. It would be a great pity if we did not take advantage of that talent.

[Lady Olga Maitland]

Agism, as far as I am concerned, has spun out of control. The great god youth will now be focusing on its seniors and appreciating them for their own worth.

I very much hope that more thinking will develop along these lines. The pensions field is a daunting area of social policy, the numbers involved are very high and the financial calculations are highly complex with so many pensions to be juggled around. This debate has been going on now since 1991. For two years, we have been airing these matters. We should now initiate, I believe, a comprehensive public information campaign and condition ourselves to these fundamental changes.

I congratulate the Social Security Advisory Committee, the independent body set up by the Government, on drawing on 4,000 comments and contributions from individuals, companies and organisations. Of these, there were 22 major ones, and it is interesting to look at the breakdown: 13 of them recommended pensions for all at 65, only one wanted retirement at 63, and just five sought a full basic pension at 60. I note, too, that the Labour party chose not to make any contribution or submissions at all to the DSS, although I understand that it is not averse to re-examining the issue.

I believe that the time has come to take the brave step and bring women's pensions up to date. The urgency is clear to all of us and it is my sincere hope that the Minister will give us some guidance on Government thinking.

5.6 am

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I congratulate the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on obtaining this very important debate. I listened with interest to her views and I have to declare an interest: I am a little older than she is. However, most of the women in my family live well into their 90s, so I have a long way to go yet.

I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me for not commenting in detail on her interesting, if somewhat single-track, argument, enabling her to arrive at her conclusion tonight. She may be aware that the Labour party is consulting widely on this complex subject of the equalisation of pension age. There is much to discuss, as I am sure that the Minister will be telling us when she responds to the debate.

The Government intend, I believe, to bring forward a proposal some time later this year and the Opposition look forward to debating the issue. I am sure that the hon. Lady will have much to contribute. She has obviously done a great deal of research on the subject and I look forward to hearing her views. As I have said, I hope that she will forgive me if I do not take this opportunity to reply to her in detail tonight; I intend to keep my powder dry, but I look forward to debating the matter with her at a later date.

5.7 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on obtaining this debate. With not only Britain but the rest of Europe now facing major demographic challenges, my hon. Friend is quite right to invite the House to consider future patterns of retirement and their effect on generations of both workers and pensioners to come.

The Government, as my hon. Friend has said, in the person of my right hon. Friend the present Leader of the House, then Secretary of State for Social Security, announced in June 1991 that we would equalise state pension age, and our manifesto at the last election reaffirmed that commitment. But we have not yet taken a decision on how we intend to achieve equalisation. We are, as my hon. Friend pointed out, considering four basic options, these being retirement age at 60, 63 or 65, or a flexible period, often referred to as a flexible decade. As I said, we have not taken a decision among those options, and it would be wholly improper for me to speculate on future legislation.

The 4,000-plus responses to the consultation document that we issued in December 1991 and the large volume of correspondence received by hon. Members demonstrate the public interest in the matter, and my hon. Friend's speech is a most helpful contribution to this wide debate.

My hon. Friend has referred to population changes forecast in Britain over the next few decades. She is right to predict a large increase in the number of elderly people. Since it has become fashionable to declare our interests tonight, it would appear that I have rather longer to wait for retirement age than my hon. Friend or the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding).

As the national insurance fund works on a pay-as-you-go basis, whereby today's workers pay today's pensions, the support ratio is fundamental to our thinking about pensions and retirement. It is therefore worth taking a few minutes to examine that ratio.

Throughout the industrialised world, people are living longer, healthier lives. As a result, an increasingly large proportion of the population are over the existing state pension ages. Our consultation document noted that, in 1990, there were on average 3·5 people of working age for every retirment pensioner in the United Kingdom.

Assuming that no change were to be made in state pension age arrangements, that ratio would drop to 2·5 to one by the year 2030. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the fewer workers there are supporting each pensioner, the more each will have to pay to maintain the same level of pension.

Since the publication of the consultation document, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has issued fresh population projections for the next century. They show an even more marked increase in the proportion of people over state pension age.

We had previously estimated that there would be 11·3 million pensioners by the year 2010; we now calculate that there will be 11·7 million. We had previously estimated that there would be 14 million people over state pension age by the year 2030; we now calculate that there will be 15·5 million. Again assuming pension age status quo, the support ration would drop to 2·2 people of working age per pensioner by 2030.

As my hon. Friend pointed out, those changes are not merely a British phenomenon. In the EC, 19·2 per cent. of the population, or 61·9 million people, are over 60. By 2010, that will rise to 23 per cent. Although we should not take it as an indication of what Britain will do eventually, because we have not yet taken a decision, we should be aware of how Europe and the industrialised world are responding to that phenomenon. My hon. Friend

provided some information, and I can add that Denmark and Norway already have a state pension age of 67, the United States is moving towards 67, Germany is moving up to 65, Japan and Italy are increasingly their state pension age, and Austria has equalised state pension ages at 65.

The problem is recognised by the European Commission. In a recent report on Communitywide retirement age policy, it noted:

"radical changes in the demographic situation"

will have a major impact on

"the balance between resources and expenditure in social security sytems".

Any country must take into account for the future the necessity and the moral imperative of providing for a sound pension system that guarantees security in retirement. It must also take into account the equally compelling necessity and moral and practical imperative to achieve that without placing an unacceptable burden on the workers of that time.

When we come to resolve that question, we will face the awesome responsibility of handing to future generations a solution to the question of state pension age that must stand the test of decades to come. Any costs or savings will be largely borne or enjoyed by future Governments, not by this Government. The policies that we hand to those of the future must be sound and safe. Costs or savings of between £3 billion and £4 billion are not prospects that we can treat lightly. Our discussion document sets out our calculations in respect of all our options, between which we have yet to choose.

The debate has placed much emphasis on the increasing numbers of the elderly. However, the wider debate develops, I would make one strong appeal: we should not regard our elderly as a burden, but a resource. We must surely all be grateful that we are living longer, healthier, more active lives. I for one will rejoice if the number of pensioners enjoying greater longevity and medical advances grows even more than we already predict.

The one thing that I cannot undertake to equalise is the imbalance of longevity between men and women, but both sexes now enjoy increased life expectancy, which we welcome. The use of those years over the age of 60, whether in remunerative or voluntary work or actively enjoyed retirement, is the subject of increasing study and interest. It is in that positive vein of not always associating advanced years with absence of contribution to the common good, while at the same time recognising every citizen's right to security and rest at the end of his or her working life, that I have addressed the issues raised by the debate.

It is also important to consider the necessity of not always confusing state pension age with an individual's retirement age. The state pension age is the age at which someone becomes entitled to the state retirement pension, but retirement age is the age at which a worker chooses to retire. For many workers that may be a different age from the pension age. Retirement age depends on a number of factors relating to the employment situation and individual choice. It is not something that can be imposed by the Government and it is not something that the Government, in sorting out state pension age, will seek to impose on individuals. We believe, however, that those who wish to remain in the labour market beyond state pension age should be encouraged and enabled to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam referred to the option of a flexible retirement. We are studying that along with the other options, and we have not yet reached a final conclusion on it. My hon. Friend is right to say that, faced with a choice of retirement ages, many might choose to retire early on reduced state pension, which would, of course, then involve a future Government in heavier income-related benefit expenditure. That option, like others, has attractions as well as drawbacks. I assure the House that, when we come to choose among the four options, which we are studying closely, we will bear in mind the points made in tonight's debate and in the wider debate.

My only regret tonight—I am making a carping point—is that we have not had much of a contribution generally from the Opposition.

Housing

5.18 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I am pleased to have this opportunity to raise the important subject of affordability in housing—albeit not at the hour that I, or I suspect the other participants in the debate, would have chosen.

I start by declaring an interest as the director of a housing consultancy which has advised a number of organisations on matters germane to the debate. It is an important subject, which has become a matter of grave concern in recent years. There have been problems of affordability in all tenures. In the home ownership market, there has been a crisis of debt and repossessions. The number of home owners facing the prospect of losing their home through repossession rose from 16,000 in 1989 to 75,000 in 1991 and 68,000 last year.

At the beginning of last year, the Prime Minister made the rash claim on, of all places, the radio programme "Desert Island Discs": "We have stopped repossessions." Some 68,000 households bear witness to the Government's failure to honour that pre-election promise. Although the rise in repossessions has been stemmed, that cannot be said of the problem of mortgage debt. At the last count, 350,000 households were more than six months in arrears with their mortgage, and 147,000 of them were more than 12 months in arrears.

Many of those households will face the misery of repossession and the loss of their home—sadly, some of them already do so. They are the victims of the failed economic policies of the 1980s, which were claimed as an economic miracle on the basis of a credit binge that came to a sickening halt in 1988, leaving all too many people with debts that proved to be millstones round their necks.

Many home owners were left with properties that were worth less than the mortgage outstanding on them—a problem that has become known in the trade language as negative equity. On the latest estimates, that problem affects at least 1·5 million householders, who are locked into the unwelcome trap where they find it virtually impossible to move because the sum that they would receive from selling their house would be substantially less than the amount that they have outstanding on their mortgage for it.

Affordability problems are not confined to the owner-occupied sector. They are seen just as starkly in all parts of the rented sector. Council tenants have faced continuing steep rent increases as a direct consequence of Government policy, specifically the new subsidy framework introduced by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Under that framework, the Government have been able to determine, to all intents and purposes, the level of rent that each local authority has to set.

One of the curious features of the subsidy framework is that the Government set notional rents for each local authority in the country—an extraordinary example of centralisation, where the gentlemen in Whitehall claim to have a better knowledge of what the rent levels should be in any area of the country than do those people who have been democratically elected from the local communities. Those in Whitehall use formulae that are so confusing and arcane that they produce complete nonsense. They claim that the rent levels will reflect market values, but produce results that lead to higher rents in areas where market values are patently substantially lower than in other regions.

In my local authority district of Greenwich, rents have had to rise this year by £4, to an average of £41·65 per tenant per week—an increase of more than 10 per cent, which is more than three times the inflation rate. Most scandalous of all is the fact that the forced rent increases have both enabled, and provided the vehicle for, the Government to offload on to council tenants an ever-increasing proportion of the cost of housing benefit. In the coming year, £790 million of housing benefit costs are being forced on to the rents of council tenants. That will result in an average increase in rent of £3·85 a week for every council tenant in the country to meet the cost of housing benefit for other tenants.

Not only is that monstrously unfair, but in no other tenure is a similar provision applicable. There would be a national outcry if it were suggested that similar provisions should apply in other tenures. Imagine the alarm if it were suggested that every home owner in Britain should pay a surcharge on his mortgage equivalent to £200 a year—that is the exactly equivalent figure—towards the cost of income support payments to other home owners in financial difficulties. That is the framework that the Government have introduced in respect of council tenants, forcing some to pay higher rent than they would otherwise need to pay so as to meet part of the cost of benefits to other tenants.

That is not only grossly unfair, but involves a scandalous breach of faith. When housing benefit was first introduced, the Government repeatedly pledged that the full cost would be borne by central Government and not offloaded on to local authorities. The Prime Minister, then a mere Back Bencher, speaking in a debate on what was then the Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill, asked specifically for an assurance on the point:

> "If 2·3 million people on supplementary benefit are likely to be transferred to a local authority rebate scheme, are the Government proposing to accept 100 per cent. liability for the costs of that scheme"?

He was given an assurance by the then Minister, Mr. Hugh Rossi, in the same debate:

> "The Government have undertaken to local authorities to reimburse to them 100 per cent. of any additional costs that they incur under housing benefit . . . When I talk of the costs, I am talking of the 100 per cent. rebate on rents and rates that will be granted".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1981; Vol. 13, c. 674-707.]

We have a clear and categorical assurance, given in response to questions from many people, including the present Prime Minister, that central Government would reimburse the cost of housing benefit 100 per cent. Now, we see that the reality is different.

Some 20 per cent. of the total cost of the housing benefit paid to council tenants is not being met by central Government but is being charged to the rent accounts of tenants—a flagrant breach of a clear pledge, given by the Government of the time. It is rather a sad comment that the Prime Minister who presides over that was party to the original pledge that it would not happen.

If council tenants are facing a raw deal because of the Government's actions, so, too, are tenants of private landlords. Deregulation of the private rented market has opened the door to massive increases in rents, when properties are offered on the market not as regulated tenancies but as assured or assured shorthold tenancies.

Even those properties subject to rent regulation are seeing steep increases when rents come to be re-registered. On average, they are re-registered at a level 25 per cent. higher than previously.

Recently, I was approached by tenants in Greenwich, whose rent had been increased by 58 per cent. To add insult to injury, the increase was almost double the amount that the landlord had requested. The rent officer and rent assessment committee mechanism has produced an extraordinary increase in rents, even above the levels sought by the landlord. There can be no justification for rents being pushed up in that way. Those increases are far in excess of the rate of inflation, and bear no relationship to what is happening in the property market.

The Government have often enjoyed making the case that rents should enjoy a closer relationship to market values—they certainly argue that forcibly in relation to their new regime on council rents. However, in the past two years, market values have been declining. Indeed, there has been a significant reduction in house prices.

If the relationship to market values were to be sustained, we should now be seeing reductions in the rents that are fixed by rent officers and rent assessment committees, instead of which we see a continuing, inexorable upward trend, which is increasing at a faster rate than previously. In 1988, average registered rents increased by 18 per cent. whereas the increases in 1989, 1990 and 1991 were 19 per cent., 22 per cent. and 25 per cent. During a period when the housing market was declining and capital values were decreasing, rent increases accelerated in the sector that is subject to regulation.

The problems are serious for council and private sector tenants, but it is housing association tenants who feel most keenly the issues that surround affordability. It is worth putting the figures in context. When the Housing Act 1988 introduced a new financial framework for housing associations, fears were widely expressed that it would lead to steep rises in association rents. Responding to the expressions of anxiety, Ministers were emphatic that housing association lettings would be "affordable". They added that tenants would be protected by a tenants' guarantee, which among other requirements would insist that housing associations set their rents so that they would be in reach of those in low-paid employment. As with so many other pledges offered by the Government, that promise was not worth the paper on which the tenants' guarantee was written.

In 1988, the National Federation of Housing Associations set up a regular monitoring system to record rents being set by associations and the incomes of tenants moving into new lettings. The system has been in operation since the second quarter of 1988. The most recent figures, for the third quarter of 1992, show that, in the intervening four years rents for all housing association lettings increased by a staggering 112 per cent. Housing association rents have more than doubled in just over four years. Yet over the same period, the average income of tenants rose by only 25 per cent., rather below the increases in the retail price index and in average earnings. That reflects the well-known fact that housing association tenants are among the least well-off in Britain.

As a consequence of rent levels increasing by more than four times the average income levels of tenants, the affordability ratio has increase. That means that housing association tenants are having to allocate an ever larger proportion of their income to meet their rent. The figures show that about 26 per cent. of their income is taken by rent. That does not take into account other related costs that are incurred through occupation of their homes, such as council tax, water rates and heating costs. In London, where costs are higher, the National Federation of Housing Associations' CORE—continuous recording—monitoring system records that, on average, tenants are putting about 29 per cent. of their income into meeting their rent. The figures are rising all the time.

The figures reflect a period when housing association grant rates, on average, were about 75 per cent. of the capital costs of new schemes, but the rates are changing. Last year, the rates were reduced to 72 per cent., and in the coming year they will decrease to 67 per cent. The Government justify the reductions on the ground that building costs have been falling during the recession, so the procurement cost of new housing has been decreasing. It has been possible to get homes more cheaply than previously, and the Government argue that grant rates can be reduced accordingly.

There is some truth in that, and it would not concern me, if the Government were ready to increase grant rates when building costs rise—as they inevitably will. Most people familiar with that sector except, once recovery begins, a significant rise in building costs as firms that have cut their margins to the bone to keep alive during the recession attempt to restore profit margins to protect their financial position. As they do so, the procurement costs to housing associations will inevitably rise.

While Ministers have been quick to use reduced procurement costs as an explanation, excuse or justification for reducing grant rates, they have been coy about giving the corollary assurance that, in the event of procurement costs increasing, grant rates will rise again to reflect that situation. When the Minister replies, it will be interesting to see whether he can give an assurance that when procurement costs rise again, the Government will accept the need to increase grant rates, to ensure no deterioration in the affordability of homes.

We have not received such an assurance so far. I hope that the Minister will cast some light on that aspect, but if not, we will think the worst—that the Government are only too happy to find reasons and excuses for cutting grant rates but far less willing to protect the interests of tenants and housing associations in different circumstances.

In the past few months, we have seen different indications of the Government's intentions. The autumn statement signalled the Government's objective of reducing grant rates to 60 per cent. in 1994-95 and to 55 per cent. in 1995-96. The National Federation of Housing Associations analysed the implications, and reached the stark conclusion that the consequence would be an increase in average rents to a level 75 per cent. higher in 1996 than those measured in the CORE monitoring system in 1992.

In particular, working households becoming association tenants would face an average rent of £84·37 in 1996, compared with £48·11 in 1992. On average, that group would spend 39·3 per cent. of income in rent in 1996, compared with 28·9 per cent. in 1992, and the percentage of new working tenants spending more than one third of their income in rent would rise from 27 per cent. in 1992 to 76 per cent. in 1996.

Those are staggering and depressing figures. It is clear that, with rents being pushed up to those levels, some 89

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

per cent. of housing association tenants moving to new lettings are expected to be people dependent on housing benefit to meet all or part of their rent.

The consequences are clear. Only those people likely to be receiving housing benefit, or who are relatively well off and are able to afford large rents without assistance, would be able to consider housing association lettings. That will inevitably exclude significant numbers of people on modest incomes—in middle to low-paid work—who cannot afford the extraordinarily high cost of renting from housing associations under those terms, and who will not qualify for housing benefit towards the cost. People in need on modest incomes and in low-paid work—the very people that the tenants guarantee said should have access to housing association lettings—will be squeezed out. That is a complete and fragrant breach of the supposed tenants guarantee.

Those who cannot afford to enter into housing association lettings because they qualify for housing benefit will be caught in a wretched poverty trap—unable to improve their income and living standards because they will lose almost every penny from every extra pound they earn through the withdrawal of their means-tested benefits on top of their tax and national insurance liabilities.

A couple with a low income will lose 30p of every extra pound that they receive in tax and national insurance—assuming, that is, that they are subject only to the 20 per cent. tax band. That is a generous assumption, because the band is very narrow. National insurance will rise to 10 per cent. under the arrangements announced in the Budget. That will leave the couple with 70p, 65 per cent. of which will be removed by the housing benefit taper and a further 20 per cent. by the council tax taper. So 85 per cent. of that 70p will be taken away, leaving the couple with precisely 10·5p.

If that couple are unwise enough to have children and hence to receive family credit, a further 70 per cent. of the residual 10·5p will be taken, leaving them just 3p from every extra pound they earn. That is a monstrous poverty trap. When the Government came to office, they complained that the richest people in Britain were subject to a penal and confiscatory tax rate of 83p in the pound; now they have created a far more penal and confiscatory framework for the lowest-paid people in employment, who depend on benefits.

That cannot be right. No one in his right mind can justify creating an arrangement that catches people in such acute poverty traps, giving them no incentive to earn more: such people will lose virtually every penny they earn, through the withdrawal of means-tested benefits and tax and national insurance contributions. They are condemned to a life of benefit dependency, with no incentives.

I remind the Minister that, when Labour was last in power, although income tax was higher—the standard rate was 33 per cent. rather than 25 per cent.; the lower rate also applied, but I am not taking that into account—a person in low-paid work would still have kept 37p out of every extra pound that he earned, because the reduction in benefit was so much less steep than it is now.

That is a very interesting difference. Someone in low-paid work, receiving help with housing costs through housing benefit—or rent rebate, as it was then—and rate rebate, but also paying tax and national insurance, would have been subject to an income loss of 63p in the pound. Currently, the equivalent figure is 89·5p in the pound. The Government should be ashamed of having plunged so many low-paid people into such a poverty trap.

This unhappy situation cries out for a new approach, and I have a series of specific proposals for action to tackle the problems. First—remembering the problems of mortgage arrears and repossessions—I believe that we need a mortgage benefit scheme to help home owners in low-paid work who are struggling to cope. For those who are unemployed, income support may well be available; if so, it will meet their mortgage interest payments up to a reasonable limit. But there are no arrangements to help those who are in work, even if—as is so often the case—the mortgage arrears are attributable to a reduction in earnings, perhaps when a member of the family ceased to work or went on to short-time work, or when his hours or earnings were reduced.

People who are in employment, but whose earnings are reduced, will have serious difficulty in making their mortgage repayments. It is precisely those people who receive no assistance under the current arrangements. The mortgage benefit scheme, which has been researched very thoroughly for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, offers an intelligent way forward, concentrating help on those most in need. The savings that the Chancellor will make by restricting mortgage interest tax relief to 20 per cent.—that move, announced in the Budget, is very welcome—should be diverted to help the poorest home owners through a mortgage benefit scheme.

Council tenants must also be liberated from the monstrously unfair housing benefit clawback. This requires a simple adjustment to the subsidy rules to exclude housing benefit from the formula, thereby putting council tenants on exactly the same footing as everyone else. Benefits to council tenants, private tenants and housing association tenants and income support for home owners should be the responsibility of society as a whole, paid for out of national taxation, not selectively offloaded on to individual sectional groups within the community. It is wrong that that should be done. That practice should be changed as soon as possible.

Local authorities should be allowed once again to determine rents locally, in the light of local circumstances, rather than be forced by Government to push rents upwards, on the basis of a mechanistic Whitehall formula which, as is so often the case, bears no relationship to local reality. With private tenants, Ministers should now act on the consultation exercise that they undertook some months ago. The evidence—which I am aware of from talking to people, not just in my own constituency but in many other parts of the country—is absolutely clear: that rent levels for private tenants have been rising by unacceptably disproportionate levels, far ahead of the rate of inflation, and that they bear no relation at all to what is happening to capital values.

Action is needed urgently to halt, if not reverse, the unjustified rent increases being imposed on private tenants. New guidance should be issued to rent officers and rent assessment committees. The latter are often the cause of the problem. Rent officers tell me that they often have no option but to increase rents far more than they would like because, if rents are referred to a rent assessment committee, they will simply be put up on appeal. Rent assessment committees have the unenviable reputation of being seen as the party of the landlord rather than as a

group of people trying to be impartial and scrupulous and trying to find an appropriate and fair balance between the interests of the two parties.

New guidance is needed to discourage these unjustified rent increases, and also proper safeguards, including appeal procedures that work for those tenants who are not in the regulated sector—tenants who have assured tenancies or assured shorthold tenancies—and who usually have no effective redress whatsoever against extortionate rents imposed and charged by their landlords. A proper mechanism for appealing against such extortionate rents and unreasonable increases is long overdue.

I believe that the Government must act immediately to reverse the very damaging threat of further reductions in grant rates to housing associations. The current figure of 67 per cent. grant rates should be taken as the absolutely minimum base line, and should be increased if either construction costs or affordability problems make that necessary. The threatened reduction of grant rates to 60 per cent. and then 55 per cent. must be repudiated as yet another of our failed Chancellor's foolish foibles. He may be unable to tell his threes from his fives, but it is time that someone else in the Government—in this case, I suggest, a Department of the Environment Minister—taught the Chancellor a few basic lessons.

At the same time, the Department of the Environment must come clean about affordability. For years, Ministers have talked about affordability but have never come up with any definition. We notice from other issues that Department of the Environment Ministers are all too keen to prescribe performance indicators to others. It is high time that they set a performance indicator in relation to affordability. Tenants of housing associations throughout the country deserve to know what is an affordable rent. They deserve to have the opportunity to challenge rent increases that are unreasonable and beyond the means of people in low-paid employment.

To do that, it is necessary to have a clear indication and a clear definition of affordability. The Government should come clean about it. In the absence of any clear criteria and a clear definition, it is possible for people to say one thing to one group of people and something else to another group, and to preside over a framework in which rents are clearly escalating and going through the roof—far beyond the means and reach of people in low-paid employment, without their having any come-back. We need some honesty from Ministers, and we need some clear definitions of affordability.

I am conscious of the fact that this debate is taking place at the end of a very long night. However, we have at least had an opportunity to air what I believe to be one of the most vital housing issues of today. I hope that, in his reply, the Minister will be able to offer some positive responses, and not just trot out the old excuses for the failure of current policies—excuses that we have heard so often. I hope he will accept that, even at this hour of the morning, lame excuses will not be good enough. We want a new approach that will bring hope to people who are desperate because of affordability problems.

5.50 am

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It is appropriate that this debate on affordability follows one on retirement and pensions. It is also appropriate that it should be taking place tonight, of all nights. I believe that when we look back we shall see 1 April as a key date with regard to housing and the homelessness crisis. I make that point because it is the date of the introduction of community care. That may not seem immediately relevant to affordability, but I suggest that it is indirectly relevant. From 1 April, people already in private residential care will not have the full cost of their care met; unlike those who enter homes after 1 April. In this of all years—it is the European year for solidarity between the generations—elderly people will find that, as a result of that policy, they cannot afford places in residential homes. If their families are unable to match the costs, they will have to leave and look for accommodation elsewhere, turning back to local authorities. Why? Because the housing benefit system will not cover the full cost.

Similarly, in the case of community care, the discharge of people from hospitals will put pressure on housing. The Government take a good policy and, somehow, manage to turn it inside out and corrupt it. They have a knack almost of corrupting the language. The very words "community care" may well turn out to mean the opposite. It may well be that there is no care and that the community is not there for the provision of support. The document on community care contained the helpful words:

"Housing is the key to independent living."

That is fine, provided that there is sufficient housing. But, without a door, what use is a key?

In the context of this debate, the primary concern of society must be the absolute shortage of housing to rent. The Audit Commission, the Institute of Housing and the Housing Corporation all come up with a figure of 100,000 when considering the number of units of accommodation that need to be provided each year. The Government's plans for this year may produce, at best, 53,000 new homes. There is a desperate shortage of housing to rent.

For another reason, tonight is an appropriate occasion for a debate on the affordability of housing. On 31 March the Government closed the severe weather shelters. I am glad that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is present, as he went on record in *The Times*, and elsewhere, in an attempt to assure us that the 400 people in the nine shelters provided as emergency accommodation throughout the winter would have places provided for them or would find spaces in the voluntary sector. On the very last day—31 March—we checked and found that 133 people in some of those nine shelters had to leave, without anywhere else to go. As we debate in this Chamber, those people are spending their night on the streets of London. That is a disgrace.

Of course, we accept that it is a good policy to have severe weather shelters, but why on earth could not the Government have made provision to ensure that people being turned out had somewhere else to go? They knew who the people were. What we have is a good policy corrupted.

The Government's housing policies are now effectively pricing people out of renting. They are making it impossible for many people to rent in the private sector, the local authority sector and the housing association sector. I remind the Minister that the housing association sector is only 3 per cent. of the stock, the private rented sector only 7 per cent. and the local authority sector 21 per cent. All in all, about a third of the population live in rented housing and they have a right to know whether their homes will be affordable in the years to come.

[Mr. John Battle]

I suggest that there needs to be some joined-up thinking between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Social Security. The affordability crisis in housing is also a housing benefit crisis. The Government are pursuing a low-wage policy and there is a fundamental contradiction between low wages and high rents. The Minister may reply that high rents will be met by high housing benefit.

The problem is that, for some people, wages are dropping. The Government claim that the average wage is rising and that is true, but they do not seem to realise that the average rises because the highest wages go up while, at the same time, people at the bottom of the scale see their incomes declining. That is where people hit the poverty trap.

The poverty trap is not for those on benefit but for those who are literally trapped between benefit and work income. They are caught coming off benefit. The Government must tackle the issue of housing benefit and the Minister should not glibly assume that social security will pay the bill. He will learn the hard way. People have to take up work—and so they should—but when they are offered a low-paid, part-time or temporary job, they will find that the income from that job will float them out of housing benefit through the tapers. They will be caught in the poverty trap because they will have to decide whether they can afford to take the job. If they cannot afford to take the job because it would mean that they were unable to pay the rent, they will face the worst double jeopardy. They will face the choice of losing their home because they cannot pay the rent or not taking a job. In other words, a work disincentive is being built into the Government's high-rent, low-wage policy.

The Government also need to make it clear whether the Treasury is giving carte blanche to the housing benefit system. From some of the statements made by the Secretary of State for Social Security, I am not sure whether the benefit tapers will be changed in the next Budget in November. If the tapers are changed and the situation becomes harsher, people will receive less from the benefit system to support their rents and will be forced to pay a higher proportion of their incomes in housing costs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) referred to the iniquitous system of local authorities effectively subsidising the income support system. When the Government ring-fenced the housing revenue accounts, that is how they insisted that the system worked. Local authority tenants not on housing benefit make up the cost of local authority tenants on housing benefit. Of course, the Government know that that is happening. That is why they have recently changed the rules for large-scale voluntary transfer. They know that the rent accounts of local councils are receiving a subsidy from tenants not on benefit to cover the deficits which the Government should be making up through housing benefit and income support.

Why should some council tenants be subsidising the housing benefit of others, who ought to get proper support through the social security system? In other words, other renters are being forced to subsidise the income support system rather than the housing system. That is iniquitous and unjust. The Government recognised that fact in connection with large-scale voluntary transfer, which is why they changed the rules for that and introduced the levy. They should scrap the system now and return to local authorities the money that is due for paying out full housing benefit.

The Government are still operating a policy of pricing people out of renting local authority properties unless they are on high or medium wages. There is almost a deliberate edge, to force people to buy by pricing them out of renting. The guidelines set by the Government for local authority rent increases this year assume a 9 per cent. increase. That is well above the rate of inflation, yet those are the costs that tenants are asked to pay; that is the money that local authorities have to raise to balance their housing revenue accounts.

On 24 March my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) asked the Secretary of State

"what assessment he has made as to the likely effect on the building of houses by housing associations of the reduction of housing association grants."

The Minister for Housing and Planning replied:

"Increasing the private finance input into housing association schemes enables us to produce significantly greater numbers of new homes with the available public resources. The reduction in the average housing association grant for rented schemes from 72 per cent. in 1992-93 to 67 per cent. in 1993-94 was achieved through lower costs without any significant impact on the affordability of rents implied."

—[*Official Report*, 24 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. *625*.]

A lot of meaning must be attached to the little word "implied". It is not the view of housing associations or their tenants that there has been no significant impact on affordability. There has indeed been a significant impact and not only I but many other hon. Members, including Conservative Members, are receiving letters from tenants in housing associations saying that they are finding it difficult to meet their rents.

On 24 March the National Federation of Housing Associations launched its affordability campaign, because it believes that the affordability crisis is now undermining housing association provision of housing to rent. If the housing associations constitute the only social rented sector that the Government are prepared to support, where does the Minister expect people to go if he prices them out of housing association properties? Even the Government's 1988 deregulation of the private rented sector did not revive it; there has been no substantial increase in properties available for private renting. There is a massive shortage of properties in the public, council rented sector. If people cannot afford their housing association flats and houses, where are they to move to? Where else can they go?

The housing associations' campaign on affordability points out that since 1989 housing association grants, the Government subsidy to housing association development, had been fixed at an average level of 75 per cent. throughout the country, but that in 1992-93 it fell to 72 per cent. and that it is now scheduled to fall to 67 per cent. But in the Department of the Environment's public expenditure announcement following the autumn statement the Government set an objective of reducing the grant to 60 per cent. in 1994-95 and to 55 per cent. in 1995-96.

The Government have not previously set grant rates for subsequent years. In a parliamentary reply on 24 March to a question from me suggesting that grants were projected to drop to those rates, the Minister said that it was alarmist propaganda. If he believes that the public expenditure statements of the Department of the Environment are

alarmist propaganda, he should eat his own words, because it is there in black and white. It says that that is the Government's objective. In a speech at the London School of Economics the Housing Minister confirmed that that reduction in grant rates was his objective.

The consequences of the reduction in grant rates will be higher rents, the growth of dependency of housing association tenants on housing benefit, housing association revenue streams increasingly dependent on housing benefit and difficulties faced by housing associations in sustaining levels of private finance. If the grant rate changes take place, it is estimated that housing associations will need to raise an extra £400 million in private finance in 1995-96 simply to maintain a stable programme. Have the Government done the arithmetic on that? Do they believe that they can raise that money? Will not the Minister concede that it is an unrealistic additional amount for housing associations to find?

What will happen? There will be a vicious circle of higher rents, housing benefit dependency and reduced loan security, all as a result of a reduction in grant rates in the Government's attempt to push the housing association movement further in the direction of raising private finance.

The National Federation of Housing Associations commissioned UBS Phillips and Drew to forecast the factors that are incorporated into the grant rate and the total cost indicator systems which govern the costs and rents of housing association production. The calculations based on those forecasts are that rents are likely to increase by a further 70 per cent. on average and dependency on housing benefit will increase to 85 per cent. of housing association tenants. It will be 90 per cent. for two-parent households.

Such percentages of incomes spent on housing costs are well beyond what is expected anywhere else in the world. The OECD suggested that if a person or a family spent more than 30 per cent. of income on housing costs, there would not be sufficient left to feed and clothe themselves, apart from the cost of travel to work.

The Government have not revealed their estimate of an acceptable percentage of income to spend on housing costs, but the Treasury has assumed a figure of 34·7 per cent. since 1989. Under the proposals for one parents and single people, that figure will be over 40 per cent. For pensioner households the position will be even worse. If grant rates drop to 55 per cent., according to the UBS Phillips and Drew survey, pensioner couples will spend 45 per cent. of their income on rent and single pensioners 52 per cent. Single people under 25 will pay 48 per cent. Those levels are unsustainable.

I hope that the Minister has seen the background briefing notes of the National Federation of Housing Associations which give figures based on the federation's continuous recording of lettings data on new tenants supplied by the associations that make up the federation. They show that 76 per cent. of new working tenants will spend more than one third of their income on rent. The question that must be asked is: in those circumstances, how could the new rents be considered affordable on any reasonable interpretation of the word? Working households becoming association tenants will face an average rent of £84·37 in 1996, compared with £48·11 in 1992. On average that group will be spending 39·3 per cent. of their income on rent in 1996, compared with 28·9 per cent. in 1992.

In other words, the percentage of new working tenants who spend more than a third of their incomes on rent will rise from 27 per cent. in 1992 to 76 per cent. in 1996. Is that the Government's intention? If so, the only conclusion is that they assume that the bill will be picked up by the Department of Social Security in housing benefit, because 89 per cent. of new tenants will be on full or partial benefit. I should be interested to know whether the Department of the Environment and the Housing Minister have clearance from the Secretary of State for Social Security to escalate housing benefit in such a way. If 89 per cent. of all new housing association tenants moving into new homes in 1966 are on housing benefit because of the change in grant rates—reducing them to 55 per cent.—they will qualify for weekly housing benefit of £30·72 in 1996, compared with £13·28 in 1992. In that case, the Government will have to pay drastically more in housing benefit.

When we look at the annual report of the Department of the Environment, we find that the increase in housing benefit for private tenants and housing association tenants in the past 12 months is incredible. I cannot see the Treasury allowing the Department of the Environment to get away with a policy of simply saying that it will jack up the rents and the Department of Social Security will pick up the bill. I suspect that the Government will start to claw it back.

If everyone is pushed into housing benefit, the question again arises: in those circumstances, is it worth new tenants having a job? In other words, if they are offered a job, they are put in the real dilemma of having to refuse it because they will not be able to make up the difference between the high rent and what they would have got on housing benefit.

Pensioners will face worse affordability problems. In 1991-92, pensioner households, except housing association lettings, paid an average of 38 per cent. of their net incomes in gross rent, compared with 25 per cent. for households under pensioner age. We all know that, because pensioners who visit our surgeries or write to us often set out their payments in detail. They can tell us their weekly milk bills. They do the arithmetic because they must pay the price of increasing bills. Pensioners will be hard-pressed if rents increase in this way because not all of them are on full housing benefit: some get a modest supplementary pension which, effectively, eliminates them from access to housing benefit. They then have to find the rent. Pensioner households pay higher average weekly gross rents than non-pensioner ones—in 1991-92, the figure was £42·49 compared with £38·30.

Are the Government suggesting that housing associations will provide welfare housing with a vengeance only for those on housing benefit? The trend is already shifting in that direction because 70 per cent. of tenants in housing associations are on benefit, compared with about 66 per cent. of council tenants. If they are saying that, there is another twist because the housing will be available only for pensioners on housing benefit.

If unemployed people on benefit are offered a job, they must accept it, regardless of how low paid it is, or they will lose the benefit. That is the new trap under the social security rules. The double-jeopardy is that, if people accept a part-time, temporary, low-paid job, it may float them out of a benefit but not give them sufficient to make up the difference in rent and they will have to move out. Even for the elderly, a bit of supplementary pension from a partner

[Mr. John Battle]

could mean that housing association properties will need notes in the windows saying "DSS only apply", which we have seen previously. If people cannot guarantee that they are on full housing benefit, they will not be able to afford the rent.

So what is the future of housing associations? *The Mail on Sunday* on 21 February said:

"Private developers could be given Government cash to build low-cost homes for homeless and poor families. Ministers may allow builders to compete with housing associations for a slice of £2 billion of Whitehall funding. Tory MPs pushing for the change are concerned that housing associations are failing to give value for money. They believe that savings could be made by 'cutting out the middleman' and funding developers directly. They argue that private developers could build more homes with the money through greater expertise and lower costs."

The hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) said in the article:

"I understand from the private sector that value for money is not being given. Many of the builders concerned claim they could build more homes for the same costs."

I should like the Minister to confirm whether that is Government policy. Does he see the housing association grant going directly to the builders when it drops to 55 per cent?

So the great honeymoon of the housing association world which the Government supported seems to be coming to a close. What are the Government's intentions for the housing association world? Do they see it having a future, providing what they would describe as "socially rented housing", or do they see the grant going direct to the builders to provide more housing at lower cost?

The race for market rents was set off by the Housing Act 1988, which was to free the private rented sector. I remember asking the Housing Minister during proceedings on that Bill whether he had persuaded the Department of Social Security to agree to underwrite the housing benefit bill if landlords decided simply to jack up the rents and charge what they wanted. I remember the Minister saying that of course landlords could not put the rent up to £100 or £150 a week and simply claim that the person was on housing benefit. What have we seen happen?

We were given another notion—market rents. What do we get now? Week after week, I receive scores of letters from people who went to the rent assessment committee because the landlord proposed to increase their rent and found that the committee agreed to increase the rent by even more. What is happening in the private rented sector is exactly what was predicted would happen. Rents are going through the roof. So far, the Government simply say that it is deregulation and that those who cannot afford rents can obtain housing benefit. How long will it be, I am worried to ask, before the Treasury cuts the housing benefit bill? Will it be in November, when the tapers are reduced, that people are told that they have to pay more rent?

I conclude with a remark that the Minister made to me when I put it to him in environment questions on 24 March that the housing association grant reduction would cause real hardship. He replied:

"I reject the alarmist propaganda that the hon. Gentleman has just revealed to the House."—[*Official Report*, 24 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 906.]

Is the UBS Phillips and Drew survey alarmist? Are the housing associations being alarmist? They tell the truth about the arithmetic and who will pay the price if the Government press ahead with their proposal.

When we talk about propaganda, the Minister should look at his Department's news releases, in particular the one of 18 March which committed the Government to spending £1·4 million on an advertising scheme to remind tenants of their right to buy. The news release which relaunched the campaign said:

"Many council tenants could find that the costs of buying compare very well with the costs of renting. In fact, an average Right to Buy mortgage repayment will be less than the average rent as from April."

Of course it will if the rents are increased to price people out into taking on mortgages. I suggest to the Minister that that statement says a lot more about the increasing costs of renting than about the availability of cheap mortgages. That is the problem. When we have a Government abolishing wages councils and driving wages down, of course the rents will be beyond people's means and the equations start to look different.

The Minister says in page 3 of the press release:

"Rents however have risen and now average rents are £33·00 a week (expected figure for April 1993) or £145 per calendar month. So mortgage costs could in fact now be less than renting costs."

I am tempted to add that it is almost like an advertisement for a timeshare. It is certainly not a commitment to a decent, affordable renting policy; it is simply suggesting that people should get out of renting and take themselves into mortgages as quickly as possible.

There we have it. That is the real propaganda, the real direction of Government policy. There is a fundamental contradiction between a Government's economic policy developing a low-wage economy and a Department of the Environment insisting on high rents. We need more rented housing; that has to be the primary position; but we also need to tackle affordability, or, in effect, people will be priced out of renting.

If the Government pursue the present policies in the public sector, the housing associations and the private sector, people will be priced out of renting. The only conclusion can be an increase in homelessness as people try to live with others, on sofas and floors, or take to the streets. What worries me is that this time it could mean homelessness among the elderly on a scale which, so far, our society fortunately has not had to face.

That might sound alarmist to the Minister, but I suggest that he does his homework on the figures. The Government could, and should, act now to pre-empt that potential scandal. The primary need is for homes to rent. The Government should ensure that people can afford to pay their rent according to their real income and means; if they do not, they will be culpably compounding the homelessness crisis and rendering the word affordability totally void of meaning.

6.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to respond to the debate.

On the Order Paper, the debate is entitled "affordability of housing". The question what is the right price level for social housing is not an easy one. This is not a simple matter of deciding that it would be nice if accommodation

were cheaper, and legislating to that end. Indeed, it could be argued that many of the current inequalities in the housing market have their roots in decisions taken on past occasions, based on precisely that sort of ill-considered wishful thinking.

One of the reasons why this country has one of the smallest private rented sectors in Europe is that the artificial rent controls effectively destroyed the private rented sector for the decades after the first world war.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: I have hardly started my speech before the hon. Gentleman invites me to give way, but I am happy to do so.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful, but it is one of the big myths that Government keep running, and it ought to be nailed as a lie. The reason why the rented sector declined is that landlords sold the houses to put the money in the bank. It was cheaper, when interest rates were high, to sell the property and accumulate money that way. Was not the cause of the gentrification of inner cities and the decline of rented housing the fact that the amount of housing to buy went up?

Mr. Baldry: That is a total canard, as the hon. Gentleman knows. The private sector declined from the first world war onwards because of rent controls which artificially kept down the return that landlords were able to make upon their investment—rent controls that were maintained by successive Labour Governments, which effectively destroyed the private rented sector. It has only been since the 1988 housing legislation, when we freed rents to proper market levels, that we have begun to see, for the first time for many decades, a private rented sector in which new tenancies equal those that are falling in.

Mr. Raynsford *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: No. I have listened to a lot from the hon. Gentlemen. They have both made very long speeches. They have both made a lot of points to which they want me to respond. It is a complex subject, and one on which I wish to respond in my own time and in my own way.

To begin with, housing is not, like some other goods such as education or health services, predominantly a public sector matter. Most households prefer to own their own homes, and a major element of our housing policies has been focused on enabling them to do so. The right to buy for council housing, and now our rents-to-mortgages proposals; cash incentive schemes to enable public sector tenants to move out into owner-occupation; shared ownership schemes—these are all important parts of our commitment to empower those who want to own their own homes to do just that. With affordability levels high, with mortgage rates at their lowest for 25 years, and with some impressive fixed rate mortgage deals on offer, now is an excellent time for those thinking about buying into the market to do so.

Not every household will want, or be able to afford, owner-occupation, so our policies also address the demand for rented accommodation; but here as well we must remember that housing for rent is not a public sector monopoly; although the private rented sector has been a declining force in housing provision throughout the century, there is now evidence of an increase in private lettings in response to the measures we have taken to encourage the private rented sector. Housing benefit means that tenants who rent from private owners are not left on their own if they face difficulty in meeting their housing costs.

Therefore, the question of affordability in the social housing sector is not something which can be treated in isolation. Not only do we need to remember the interaction with the other housing sectors; we also need to consider what the nation as a whole can afford to spend on housing programmes; to make sure that what we can afford is targeted as closely as possible on those in the greatest need; and to use it as efficiently as possible.

In the local authority sector, we have intentionally been moving towards a more market-based system of rents, where the rent the authority charges reflects the value of a letting. Instead of subsidising the bricks and mortar of the property itself, we have been subsidising the people who matter—individual tenants. That approach means that where local authority tenants can afford to pay more towards their housing costs, they do so.

In the past, there has been a great deal of emphasis on keeping down gross rents. However, that policy has produced some pretty odd results. In the local authority sector, rents have tended to reflect historic investment costs and arbitrary decisions on rent levels by local authorities rather than the intrinsic value of the housing on offer.

Thus, it has been common for local authorities to charge a high rent for a virtually uninhabitable system-built flat simply because the investment was recent and the debt charges high, and a much lower rent for a pleasant, traditional older house built some time ago. It is no wonder that some estates have been hard to let. As well as relative rents being out of line with reality, the average level of all gross local authority rents had reached an artifically low level by the time we took office in 1979, so we have been pursuing a policy of gradually increasing local authority rents in real terms.

Ring-fencing the housing revenue account has put an end to arbitrary subsidies to or from the ratepayer or council tax payer, and by shifting subsidy from bricks and mortar to people, we achieve a fairer distribution of the available subsidy.

The increases have not been severe, as we accept that tenants who do not receive housing benefit need to be protected from too steep a withdrawal of the subsidy to their rents. In order to move towards a more rational pattern of local authority rents, we have been targeting our guideline rent increases according to the capital value of different local authority housing stocks, so the authorities with the most valuable stocks are those that increase their rents the most.

We have also encouraged all authorities to move towards a more rational pattern of rent among their different properties—a pattern that reflects the value rather than the cost of different local authority homes. A tenant who is unable to meet the full cost of the rent gets means-related help from the housing benefit system. Some 70 per cent. of local authority rent increases are met by rent rebates.

Since 1989, local authorities have faced the discipline of the ring-fenced housing revenue account. It increases the focus on the delivery of housing management services, which are properly chargeable to rents. It means that authorities cannot bail out an inefficient housing operation at the expense of the local council tax payer, as too many

[Mr. Baldry]

did in the past. The need to make sure that rental income, together with the support we provide through the housing revenue account subsidy, meet outgoings provides a vital check. I make no apology for moving the subsidy away from the buildings and towards the people who live in them; and away from the suppliers and towards their customers. That is a crucial step towards a more efficient local authority housing sector. As local authorities grow into their role as enablers, and as the pressures of compulsory competitive tendering for housing management improve performance, I hope to see further improvements over the coming years.

While local authorities account for the bulk of the existing social rented sector, they are, of course, no longer the main suppliers of new social housing for rent. That role has been taken on by the housing associations, which have been able to make use of private finance to ensure that the funds they receive from the Government through the Housing Corporation are translated into the maximum number of good-quality homes.

Since 1988, public spending on housing association grant has been supplemented by more than £2 billion of private sector finance—a clear gain to housing output at a time of public spending restraint. That large sum of private finance has enabled a great deal of additional investment in social housing to take place. The average housing association grant rate for this year is 72 per cent. Private finance enables a third more homes to be built with the available public money than would otherwise be so. For 1993-94, grant rates have been reduced, without any impact on rents, because of competititive prices and low interest rates.

Our manifesto promised 153,000 new homes to rent over a period of three years. I am confident that we shall do much better than that, partly because of the housing market package announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in November. I shall outline the outstanding success of that package in a moment. The private funding that housing associations can raise, however, also makes a vital contribution. The reductions achieved this year through lower interest rates and competitive prices have enabled us to reduce the rate of housing association grant from 72 to 67 per cent. without any significant impact on the affordability of the rents implied by those grant rates. That has improved output—an extra 3,300 new homes provided this year as a result of the increase in private sector funds levered in.

We must strike a balance between rent levels and the number of homes provided. There is no magic wand that we can wave to make it possible to provide decent homes more cheaply. If we choose to provide subsidy at a higher level, we must forgo the extra output, which, I am sure that hon. Members would agree, is badly wanted by those in unsatisfactory accommodation. *[Interruption.]*

As with local authority tenants, it is only those on incomes high enough to be outside the housing benefit system who will face the full impact of higher rents. It is, of course, important that they do not face unfair rises or increases that are too steep. Where resources are available to tackle housing need, it must be right that we increasingly move towards directing them, through the housing benefit system for poorer tenants, at those who have the greatest need, and make new homes available to those who are not satisfactorily housed.

Housing associations have been able to take advantage of low interest rates and low building costs to build more homes and house more people. Opposition Members will hear concerns about affordability from housing associations—as I frequently do. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) referred to the lobbying that housing associations have been carrying out in recent days.

What is most significant and at the crux of the debate—although housing associations have not made it clear in their various representations—is that this year, at a time when those associations have been expressing concern about affordability and the housing association grant rate, those self-same associations have put forward more than four and a half times the number of schemes that can be supported by the resources available for this year. At those grant rates, their bids have been four and a half times the amount of the money available. That clearly suggests that, whatever concerns they may express in public, housing associations have confidence in their ability to make use of the resources available at those grant rates and to achieve the higher outputs that we have sought.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) argued that 67 per cent. was the minimum grant rate that it was possible to sustain. I simply invite him to explain how, when housing associations are bidding at levels of four and a half times the money available through existing grant rates, one can possibly justify saying that 67 per cent. is the absolute minimum for housing association grant.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister answer the following question, which will help him to resolve the question that he has put to me? Has the Housing Corporation—which, as he knows, recommends to Ministers the appropriate grant rate for housing associations—recommended the reduction of grant rates from 72 to 67 per cent? If it did not, the Minister will have to explain to the House why he and his colleagues ignored the advice of the Housing Corporation, which was concerned about the affordability problems that were being caused by reducing grant rates.

Mr. Baldry: Before I answer that question, the *Official Report* will show that the hon. Gentleman completely ducked and evaded the question that I asked him, which is the core question. I will answer his question about the advice from the Housing Corporation as it raises the issue contained in his speech—and about which he has been muttering sotto voce ever since—about whether we would contemplate increasing the housing association grant rate.

We have repeatedly made it clear that, year on year, we make no final decisions about the grant rate until we have all the evidence and advice, which obviously includes advice that we receive from the Housing Corporation. This year, I suspect that it will also include the advice that may be offered by the Select Committee on the Environment, of which the hon. Gentleman is a member and which is currently conducting a study into the Housing Corporation and its work.

We have made no shadow of a secret of the fact that our objective is to increase the proportion of private financing put into new schemes in future by reducing grant rates to 60 per cent. in 1994-95, in line with the wider initiatives to expand the role of private finance announced in the autumn statement. But final decisions will be taken only

when we have assessed the likely impact on housing associations' ability to raise the private finance necessary. Those decisions are taken year on year, and they will be taken against the background of that available information. Within that context, the Housing Corporation's advice will always be listened to carefully, as it was last year, but we will also bear in mind the need to make sure that the resources available go, as far as possible, towards helping those who need a home.

With a finite amount of capital for investment, we have to examine the trade-off between how much we can do and how much we ask tenants to pay for it. At whatever level of capital spending, we are forced to choose between building fewer homes with lower rents or more homes with higher rents. Some large numbers are involved in that trade-off. Quite small reductions in the subsidy that we pay to suppliers of housing association homes, in the case of new housing, can have a major impact on output.

This year's reductions in average housing association grant level by just 5 per cent. will enable an extra 3,300 homes to be built. In that case, rents will not have to rise, because the grant rate reductions have been made possible by cost savings. If we had followed the policies advocated by the Opposition, those extra houses would never have been built.

Recently, there have been some encouraging signs emerging from the statistics of families accepted as homeless by local authorities. The number of homelessness acceptances in 1992 was 2 per cent. less than in the previous year—the first year-on-year reduction. The signs on the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation are even more encouraging, with only 7,500 households housed there by local authorities, compared with more than 12,000 a year ago, and that is a drop of 38 per cent. We hope that, as the new homes made available through the housing market passage come on stream, the figures will continue their current hopeful trends.

I am happy to be able to tell the House that the housing market package has exceeded our expectations, and I should like to take the opportunity to congratulate all those who have been involved on the work they have done. Around 18,000 homes for rent will be made available in England, well exceeding the target of 16,000; grants to local authority and housing association tenants will enable some 3,500 households to move into the owner-occupied sector, freeing their current homes for those in need.

The 80 housing associations involved deserve great credit for their achievement. What they had to undertake was not inconsiderable within the time scale, and purchases have been made right across the country in almost all local authority areas, making a vital contribution towards meeting housing need, and often bringing on significant numbers of new houses for rent within particular areas.

However, we shall never allow ourselves to become complacent. Homelessness is still a significant problem, which demands tough decisions on how we use the resources at our disposal. The families who are still in unsatisfactory bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and who need a home of their own to give them a chance to bring up their children in the way they would want, will not thank us if we allow concern for existing tenants who are already comfortably housed, and who can afford to pay a little more towards the cost of their housing, to dominate our thinking at the expense of building new homes.

It is not just those who are unsatisfactorily housed in temporary accommodation who should be at the front of our minds. We must also remember the needs of those who have no home at all. Our rough sleepers initiative has made a significant impact on the problem of rough sleeping in central London. We have spent over £96 million. That money will provide nearly 1,000 hostel bedspaces, 700 places in flats and houses leased from the private sector, and more than 2,000 places in permanent move-on accommodation.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West made various assertions alleging that those who had been housed in rough weather shelters had not been provided with accommodation when they left. His figures are badly wrong. Only about 10 people were refused further accommodation, but I do not intend to have a spat about that at this early hour in the morning. I will arrange to have the information that we have made available in the *Official Report* so that it can be seen on the record, and there can be no doubt of the success of those involved in those schemes.

These measures have been having success. Independent research suggests that the number of people sleeping rough in central London has more than halved from its level of three years ago. We need to do what we can to ensure that the figures continue to reduce, and it is vital that all the agencies concerned with rough sleepers co-operate to achieve that end. At Lincoln's Inn fields, for example, Camden council, the Government, and voluntary organisations have co-operated to ensure that everybody formerly living there was offered alternative accommodation.

Tackling rough sleeping is not a simple task. It requires close co-ordination between central Government and local government, housing associations, and voluntary groups, to ensure that the needs of those sleeping rough are tackled in the round, and to make sure that rough sleepers have the opportunity to start a new life with more secure housing. The work of the rough sleepers initiative is not just the work of central Government; it depends on all the agencies involved working together with those who need shelter to find the right solutions.

I have talked about the needs of those who are without a proper permanent home to emphasise that, when we talk about affordability, we need to remember the purpose of our housing policy. It is to ensure that a decent home is in reach of every family. That is not wishful thinking—it is a substantial commitment—but it involves hard choices. It requires us to make sure that the resources that we can afford as a nation are targeted as closely as possible on the real problems, and on those in greatest need, and we are determined to do that.

Child Support Agency

6.45 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am pleased to have secured a debate on the operational guidelines for the Child Support Agency. The agency will come into operation on 5 April and I have already heard advertisements for it on the radio which have a background of reassuring, soft-soap music that is intended to assure the public that it will be of assistance to them. The adverts hide, however, the operation of a potentially vicious piece of legislation, especially for many of the women whom it is intended to help. I think that it will help many women to obtain maintenance payments from the father of their child and it will also help some fathers. At the same time, it is potentially vicious for some women. I shall set out the reasons for that when I refer to the operational guidelines.

The Child Support Act 1991 passed through the House without the detailed scrutiny that such a measure should have received. That was probably because it passed through this place shortly before the general election. It was the strategy of the then leader of the Labour party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), not to make matters such as child support issues in the election campaign. He decided to concentrate on the main areas of difference between the parties, such as unemployment and the national health service, and to avoid other arguments. In some instances it was felt that the Labour party would have problems in defending itself and in others it was considered that the issues could be distorted. We know, however, that my right hon. Friend did not concentrate entirely on unemployment and the NHS and that he introduced proportional representation at the end of the campaign, but that is history. It was the tactic not to make the Child Support Bill an issue.

The principle that a father should pay for his child is generally accepted. I do not think that there is any doubt about that. It is only unfortunate that the details behind the principle were not examined in detail. For example, the Treasury will be the main benefactor when the agency comes into operation. We know that 70 per cent. of all single mothers are on income support. Every extra penny that they obtain through the agency will go to the Treasury. The guidelines were not issued at the time that the Bill passed through the House, so the intimidation aspect was not given proper consideration. Nor were the family poverty consequences of the benefit penalties considered. If a woman is deemed not to have co-operated, she can lose £8·80 per week from her income support for six months and a further £4·40 per week for the next 12 months. That can push a woman and her family below the poverty line, so both her welfare and that of her child or children may be jeopardised. The House did not give the Bill the scrutiny that it deserved.

There is no advantage to pursuing a maintenance claim for the majority of the 70 per cent. of single mothers on income support because any maintenance would be set off against their income support. Many of those women would not receive an extra penny, yet they would confront a panoply of threats and risks. The operational guidelines will discourage genuine income claims from many women.

Intimidation by DSS or Child Support Agency officers, however well they have been trained, will inevitably occur. The woman could be "locked up" in a DSS office, perhaps with her child, until she gives the required information. Under the guidelines, she can be pursued at her home or at work until she provides that information. She may be at home and without any support while the interview is conducted. She may be asked intimate questions about her sex life that she does not want to answer. She may be told that she has no good reason for refusing to give information, even if she fears that to do so might have violent consequences for her and her children. She can also be threatened with the benefit cuts to which I referred earlier. Women in that situation must take on the new role of informers to the DSS part of the police state that is being established in that respect.

The message to women with children on benefits is that they cannot be independent—they must disclose information about themselves and about the father of their children, or they will lose a substantial proportion of their benefit.

The guidelines place a woman and her child or children at personal risk. The Child Support Agency leaves women in the lurch and accepts no responsibilty for the consequences of a woman disclosing information that the agency requires. Under the application of the "Requirement to Co-operate Policy Guidelines", which were recently published, the parent with care—PWC—must show good cause for refusing to co-operate, or she will lose benefit. Even if she fears that making such a disclosure is against her own best interests, she must do so. The guidelines give many examples of women being forced to disclose.

The beginning of the guidelines refers to a parent not having to give the information if she will suffer "harm or undue distress" as a result. That seems reasonable, but no technical definition of harm or undue distress is given: a good deal of discretion is given to the Child Support Agency and the DSS officer concerned.

The guidelines give the dictionary definition of harm—

"to hurt, injure or damage"—

and of undue distress—

"excessive, unjustifiable or disproportionate strain, pressure, anguish or pain".

What the guidelines do not mention is the woman's fear of those experiences. That is an unsatisfactory start: the guidelines do not provide the necessary get-out for the woman who could become a victim if she discloses information about the father of her child.

The guidelines give the DSS the opportunity to "doorstep" a woman at her home, perhaps to snoop on her —that has happened in the past—or even to knock on the door of her place of work. Paragraph 7 states:

"several important points . . . should be borne in mind"—

I shall return to that phrase—

"the welfare of any children living with the PWC must be considered."

That is not a factor that would allow a woman not to disclose if the children's welfare would be damaged; it need only be "borne in mind" by the DSS officer. In many ways it is a meaningless guideline and the DSS is likely to go ahead and cut the benefit anyway if it so chooses.

Paragraph 7 states that

"the PWC has a right to be believed unless what she says is inherently contradictory or implausible".

Implausible to whom? To the DSS officer. If he takes a hard line, the phrase "borne in mind" will not fit the bill.

There is another interesting aspect of paragraph 7, which states:

"a reduced benefit direction is a strong sanction and will have an important impact on the income of a PWC".

In the context of paragraph 7, that is a threat: a DSS officer can say, "I am going to impose this sanction to make you give the information."

The paragraph also states that such reductions should not feature in any benefit savings statistics. That is disingenuous: over time, pressure could still be imposed for cutting benefits. The Government have published league tables in every other area; they may do the same in this regard, thus putting pressure on DSS officers to cut benefit.

If the woman fails to complete and return the form she will be penalised. She will be deemed to have refused to co-operate. Paragraph 12 says that the Child Support Agency is supposed to help a woman who does not want to fill in the form—for reasons connected with her own safety—to obtain maintenance. That is a lie, for 70 per cent. of women will obtain no extra maintenance. That money goes to the Treasury. Women will see through that deception.

The paragraph also says that the absent parent will not be given the woman's address by the DSS officer, or even information about the town where she lives. That would be a welcome statement, if it were true. In most circumstances, however, the absent parent will know the woman's address. I have already asked why the Child Support Agency does not pick up the consequences of its actions. It does not offer any support to women who want to be rehoused if they have been forced to give this information. In the majority of cases, the absent parent is likely to know the address. The Child Support Agency does not help the woman to find safe housing when her address is known to the absent parent.

The paragraph goes on to state that the payment of maintenance does not give the absent parent the right to contact the child. What help is there with legal fees in those circumstances? The social fund does not make it a priority for the DSS to obtain an injunction against the absent parent to prevent him from gaining access, if that is what the woman wants. The Child Support Agency washes its hands, even though that is the consequence of what it forces upon women in a number of cases.

In addition, the paragraph states that the mother may want more flexibility in her life and that maintenance will help her to get it. In the majority of cases, that is a laughable statement. If a single mother is on income support, any maintenance is matched by a cut in her benefit. There is no flexibility for her. The extra money goes to the Treasury.

Paragraph 13 states that if a woman still refuses to co-operate, despite knowing of the help that she can obtain from the Child Support Agency, consideration will need to be given to whether the parent with care and/or any children living with her will be at risk of harm or undue distress. Again, that sounds all right, but it could be interpreted as the DSS saying to the woman, "You're not a proper mother. You haven't co-operated." My reading of that paragraph is that the kids could end up going into care. Co-operation with the Child Support Agency is regarded in the guidelines as more important than a woman's perception of the harm or damage that might be done to her or her children. That is not satisfactory.

According to paragraph 14 of the guidelines, there will be no definitive list of circumstances. Each case will be taken as it comes. That could lead to considerable inconsistency in deciding who must disclose and who does not have to disclose. A woman in one area may have to disclose, whereas a woman in exactly similar circumstances in another area may not.

The guidelines deal also with the question of fear of violence. In this regard, there is the matter of the victims of sexual abuse, including rape and incest, resulting in the birth of a child. Pressure is put on the woman to name the father, even in those serious and fearful circumstances. Again the Child Support Agency washes its hands of the consequences, saying that they are a matter for the police and that it will not reveal the woman's address. That might well be ludicrous, for obvious reasons. In such circumstances the Child Support Agency makes absolutely no commitment to provide safe housing—another appalling fault. Paragraph 18 says that, although cases must be handled with extreme care, the information must be obtained. It must be obtained despite the woman's fears.

Paragraph 19 provides that it is for the officer of the Child Support Agency, not for the woman, to determine whether there is a risk of harm or undue distress. What will be the level of an officer making such decisions? I expect that it is likely to be a relatively low level on the administrative scale, yet the officer will have enormous discretion in cases of considerable sensitivity.

Paragraphs 20 to 24 relate to an absent parent who may want to see his child. Paragraph 20 deals with the fear that if the absent parent is required to pay maintenance he will demand to see the child, even if that is considered to be disruptive. The woman may wish to sever all links with the absent parent. These are very good reasons for not having to provide information, but it is not recognised in the guidelines. The guidelines state that maintenance is entirely separate from access. They also state that many parents with care and absent parents

"are known to link the two but it is important to stress that both the parents are responsible for maintaining the child subject to their financial circumstances."

In other words, it is admitted that parents link the two issues. That is right, because, in many cases, if the absent parent pays maintenance, he will demand access and thus come back into the woman's life, which could cause great problems for her. In any event, that will be her fear.

Once again, the Child Support Agency washes its hands of the matter. There is no comment on what happens if the woman's fears are realised and the father demands access. The guidelines contain no help for the woman or child whose lives might be disrupted. They take no account of the possible consequences of its demands.

Paragraph 22 states:

"A belief that an approach to an AP would result in demand for contact should not, on its own, normally be sufficient to enable a PWC to succeed in a claim that harm or undue distress"

would be caused. Again, the guidelines ride roughshod over the mother's fears. It is for the courts, or someone else, to take up the issue of access, but there is no help for the woman to get a court injunction. She will get nothing from the social fund in those circumstances. Often, it will be too late for her to go to court because the damage will have been done.

Paragraph 23 states:

"The PWC's wish to sever links with the AP should not normally provide grounds for her to succeed in a claim of harm or undue distress. There would normally need to be additional factors"

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

for that to be the case. The wishes of the parent with care are being overridden by the DSS, with the result that she must make a disclosure.

Paragraph 24 states that PWCs

"may refuse to co-operate because it could cause them or their children undue distress to re-open any degree of contact after a lengthy period."

In that case, additional factors would be required for the case to be made. Paragraphs 22 to 24 reveal that the Child Support Agency could not care less about the children's best interests.

Paragraph 26 is interesting. It states:

"Sometimes, a PWC will wish to protect an AP . . . because he is living in a stable relationship with someone else',

but the guidelines do not care about that. The paragraph continues:

"It would be unusual for this situation to justify a claim that co-operating would cause undue distress".

even though it might be a genuine reason for not making a disclosure. Why should a state agency disrupt a stable relationship in another family?

The same paragraph also states:

"The PWC should be reminded that the CSA will act as a buffer between her and the AP and that . . . contact with the AP will be on a confidential basis."

A lot of women will not believe that that will necessarily happen. There is no guarantee of confidentiality, and the CSA is not liable if it breaks that guideline. That is not satisfactory.

Paragraph 27 is about parents who are juveniles—that is, parents who are either under 16 or, although over 16, are still classed as children for income support purposes. They do not have to disclose who the absent parent is, but they will have to do so as soon as they put in their own claim for income support, when they become 16 or when they leave school, so they could well face threats and intimidation along the lines of, "Disclose the parent now, because you will have to tell us when you are 16 anyway." So juvenile mothers could be put under great duress.

Paragraphs 29 and 30 refer to those who may face criminal prosecution. Again, juveniles may be involved. One or other of the parents may have been under age, so there could be a prosecution. Paragraph 29 says:

"Other than in the most exceptional circumstances"—

which it does not explain—

"information obtained by the Child Support Agency will not be passed to the police."

Again, there is no guarantee of that. A lot of DSS information is passed to the police, via a telephone call from police officers to the DSS office, for example. Many parents will not believe that the information will not be passed on and that prosecution will not result.

Paragraph 30 says:

"it is unlikely that these circumstances"——

that is, the fear of being prosecuted—

"on their own, will be sufficient to justify a refusal to co-operate."

Again, people are being forced to co-operate on pain of losing their benefit.

Paragraph 31 is about artificial insemination. There has been extensive correspondence, in which the Minister has been involved, on that subject in *The Guardian*. I shall not go into detail about that, but perhaps the Minister will comment on it, because he remarks in his letters to the newspaper have provoked further correspondence saying that people who have had artificial insemination still have to name the father.

Paragraph 31 also says that the former husband may have to pay maintenance. That is incredible. The former husband may have opposed the artificial insemination, or it may have taken place after the relationship had broken down. Yet he will still be pursued for maintenance. That is most unsatisfactory.

Paragraph 35 is concerned with cases in which the parent with care wanted the child but the absent parent did not. The guidelines say that, regardless of those circumstances, the absent parent still has to pay. That could be unfair in many cases. For instance, there could have been deception. There is an argument that it would be unfair for the father to have to pay in such a case.

Single women, and their freedom of choice to have a child, are the real target of the guidelines.

If a single woman—perhaps a lesbian—wants to have a child, but does not want to name the father, she will be forced to go with someone anonymous so that she cannot provide a name. That is forcing that woman into something even more immoral and denying her freedom of choice. Again, that is not acceptable.

Paragraph 40 refers to voluntary arrangements under which the parent with care may not wish to co-operate because she considers that she already has a satisfactory arrangement with the absent parent and does not wish to disturb it. According to the paragraph, she should co-operate. The disturbance of a voluntary agreement would not on its own be sufficient to justify a claim of harm or undue distress. Again, the woman will be forced to go against what she considers her own best interests.

Paragraph 41 deals with a parent with care who is mentally ill or handicapped. That might prevent her from understanding what was required, so that she might seem unco-operative. Officials are advised to treat her with patience and sensitivity because she may have given as much information as she could. The clear implication is that the DSS will still force a mentally ill or handicapped parent with care to provide the name of the father. At least, the paragraph is ambiguous and could be interpreted in that way by a hardliner in the Child Support Agency.

What about the woman who has had more than one lover around the time of conception? What will the agency do in those circumstances? Will the woman be forced to name one, both or more? Will the agency pursue the alleged absent parent and inform him that the woman slept with more than one man at the time? What will be the moral code in dealing with such cases? If either side wants DNA testing to establish the father's identity, will the agency wash its hands of the test and tell the person to pay for it if he is rich enough, or will it just label him as the parent? The Minister should answer that point. That will affect the father, but again the woman will be the victim: the DSS will be judgmental because she has had more than one lover at the time of conception. She will probably be deemed not to have co-operated and will therefore lose her benefit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) wants to know what will happen in cases where there is a variation in the maintenance which has already been agreed by the courts. According to her constituents, already the courts are telling people that they

will not deal with the matter and that it is being referred to the new agency. What is happening? Is the agency usurping the role of the courts? That is a fair point.

There is the matter of a clean break. I shall read a passage from a recent issue of *The Big Issue:*

"One of the more disturbing aspects of the New Act . . . is its retrospective powers. Over the past 20 years the divorce courts have favoured the clean-break principle. To guarantee a roof over the child's head, and ensure the mother was entitled to state benefits, the courts encouraged and, in many cases, ordered men to agree to clean breaks.

Usually this involved the man moving out of the matrimonial home and giving up his equity in it as an alternative to paying maintenance. These couples who made a clean break settlement will now have their agreements torn up by the CSA."

An article in *The Guardian* of 19 January says that the alternative will be exacerbated tension and wrangling over access, despite the fact that the clean-break principle was agreed. It interferes with the woman's right if she wants a clean break. The court was the final adjudicator on the matter, yet it will not be: the Child Support Agency will have the role retrospectively. It is forcing the woman to have economic dependency on a partner who is perhaps long gone from the relationship.

I shall say a word about men in such circumstances. They may have acquired the responsibility of a new family which will be disregarded in many respects by the Child Support Agency. Such men may be on income support or students with a loan, small grant or low wage which will be reduced. They may find themselves below the poverty level.

I quote a case referred to in the same issue of *The Big Issue*:

"Rob, 37, lives in Sheffield. He left his wife, Lynn, three years ago. Since then he has paid no formal maintenance.

As part of a clean break agreement he moved out of the house, took on the family debts and agreed to share the care of his two daughters, who now split their time between their two parents' homes. In return he was given one third of the equity of the house and awarded a nominal maintenance order . . . Everyone thought the matter was settled.

But Lynn is now on Income Support. 'Already' Rod says, 'the DSS has intimidated her into giving them my address. My understanding is that any money taken from me will reduce Lynn's benefits. At the same time it will reduce the amount of money I have to spend on my children.'

Rod is unmoved by the suggestion that the taxpayer is supporting his children. 'I'm a taxpayer myself. I'm on low income and I pay tax at the single person's rate. I also spend money on my children. The Government has a responsibility to ensure that people do not fall below a minimum standard, children included.

The effect of the Act will be to make my children worse off. I'll do all I can to resist the Child Support Agency—not because I refuse to look after my children's interests, but because I want to look after them.'"

That situation could be repeated in a number of circumstances.

The Child Support Agency and the guidelines to which I referred extensively could have some bad consequences for a large number of men, women and children. They could even result in violence as the bitterness which has long since been buried brought back to the surface. If that happens under the guidelines, the Child Support Agency will wash its hands of the consequences. That is immoral. The Government should re-examine the legislation, which in the next century may well be regarded as Dickensian.

7.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): First, I apologise to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for being a moment late arriving for the debate. I congratulate him on securing the last Adjournment debate of the night, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond to him.

The hon. Member and I know each other extremely well. I fully appreciate the sincerity with which he put his case. I hope that he will accept that I have the same degree of sincerity. I am worried about exactly the same people about whom he is worried. But I feel that the hon. Gentleman's fears are overblown. I hope to demonstrate to him in the next half hour or so that we have considered those fears carefully, and that they are met by the workings of the agency.

I begin by setting the Child Support Agency in context. The new agency is unique among the next steps agencies which have been set up by the Government, because it builds a new service from scratch. The service will create a new system for the assessment, collection and payment of child maintenance. The service will not only be available for those who usually come to the Department of Social Security and the Benefits Agency—those who receive benefits. It will also take over the role of the courts in assessing and enforcing maintenance for all parents who wish to take advantage of the new arrangements.

The aims of the agency are to deliver on behalf of children a consistent, effective and efficient service for the assessment, collection and payment of child maintenance. In addition, the agency aims to help parents with the care of children to make informed choices about whether to take up employment.

To achieve those aims, the agency's objectives are to implement the Child Support Act 1991 under agreed plans for the phased take-on of clients and ensure that maintenance assessments are accurate and payments are regular; to provide a service to clients which is accessible, courteous, prompt, fair and efficient, and seen by them as such; to provide clear and accurate information to clients and the public about the child support system and the services and benefits available to clients who are in work; to establish and maintain an effective working relationship with the courts, advice agencies and other organisations with an interest in the agency's business; to contribute to the Department's evaluation and development of policy and ensure that the agency can respond to change; and to make the most efficient and effective use of available resources.

The hon. Member began by saying that the purpose of the Child Support Act 1991 was not necessarily to benefit children but to benefit the taxpayer. In the case of those on income support, the broad principle behind the Child Support Act is that all parents have an obligation to maintain their children. A child has the right to be maintained by each of its parents financially, if the parents can afford to do so and no matter what the relationship between the parents has become.

The interest of the taxpayers is that, although all taxpayers would like to assist children when they need help and no other help is available, most taxpayers feel that, when the parents can meet an obligation to their children, they should do so. As the hon. Gentleman said, many taxpayers are low paid. They have their own families to look after. It surely cannot be wrong, then, that, if the

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

obligation towards a child can properly be met by the parent, it should be. If the money that is taken from the father is used to reduce the income support pound for pound, others are relieved of a burden which they should not have.

I also remind the hon. Gentleman that family credit —the "in work" benefit—has a £15 a week maintenance disregard, so there is an encouragement for a woman to go back to work. We recognise, as the hon. Gentleman will, that the majority of lone parents do not wish or intend to stay on income support for ever. Most lone parents want to get back into work. As their children become older, obviously it becomes easier for them to return to work.

Establishing maintenance in the first place is an important part of that process. Even if at first the woman receives no immediate benefit by way of an increase in the amount of money received, should she go back into work, the maintenance will provide an extra source of income. As time goes on, having that maintenance right established and being paid will add to a woman's options. The hon. Member will agree that we want women to have the maximum range of choice in circumstances such as he has described. I feel that that choice is extended by establishing maintenance at an early stage and maintaining it throughout the child's life. That is one of the purposes of the Act, so even if some women do not see an immediate benefit to themselves financially, the benefit can accrue in the medium and longer term, and can be a real and genuine benefit.

The hon. Gentleman spent some time dealing with the guidelines for the requirement to co-operate, which I fully understand. I will come to those in some detail as time goes on, but I should like to start with some general remarks about the requirement to co-operate and why it is there; and also place it in the context of some of the remarks that he made at the beginning of this debate about the way in which Opposition Front-Bench Members had dealt with the matters throughout.

It is not the first time, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, that the requirement to co-operate has been raised, either with me or with my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Social Security. I am, however, absolutely clear that the agency has put procedures in place to ensure that the policy of the Government is delivered, and that the policy is that the requirement to co-operate which applies to certain people receiving benefits will be waived if there are reasonable grounds for believing that there will be a risk of the parent with care or any child living with her suffering harm or undue distress as a result of authorising the Secretary of State to take action.

The hon. Gentleman questioned the need for the requirement to co-operate. I do not believe that that view is sustainable under any reasonable scrutiny. We have made it plain, and the hon. Gentleman accepts, as do his Front-Bench Members, that both parents are responsible for the financial support of their children.

During the consideration in Committee of the Child Support (Miscellaneous Amendment) Regulations 1993 on 17 March, the Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) said:

"the Labour Opposition support strongly the principle of the Child Support Act of forcing financial responsibility on the absent parents".—[*Official Report, Third Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.*, 17 March 1993; c. 7.]

In another place, on 25 March, Baroness Hollis, took the same line in general, recognising that

"both parents, have an obligation to maintain children and that when husbands walk away from wives, or when wives walk away from husbands, they do not also walk away from their children".—[*Official Report*, House of Lords, 25 March 1993; Vol. 544, c. 500.]

I do not believe that these general statements of support for the policy would bear any examination whatsoever if there were not some requirement on a parent with care to co-operate with the agency in seeking maintenance. If that were not the case, surely the hon. Gentleman would concede that those would just be hollow words. If it were possible for either parent, solely at his or her wish, to walk away from their obligations to their children merely because of a change in relationship between them, there would be a danger that the child would miss out. There has to be some consideration of sanction in order to give those general words of support any meaning.

I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that that form of sanction was very clearly designed in the Act, but it was precisely because we sought to explain to hon. Members throughout the House the way in which we would deal with that sanction and the sort of things that we would take into account that the Act attracted such all-party understanding and support.

Much of what the hon. Gentleman said this morning questioned the basis of the way in which we intend to apply those guidelines and deal with this difficult issue of the requirement to co-operate, but in his remarks he really did seek to present a classic worst case scenario at every step. I put it to him that we have taken sufficient care and concern to ensure that that should not happen.

I believe that it was precisely because of the intentions that we explained to the House during the passage of the Bill that it received all-party support. I do not think that it is now right for hon. Gentlemen to seek to suggest that they did not raise too much of a fuss about it because they did not know how it would work. If the words about the responsibilty of parents were really meant, they were meant with an understanding that there would have to be some consideration of sanctions should there not be co-operation with the agency.

I believe that the general welcome was given because hon. Members understood how we intended to apply the legislation. I now wish to turn to that in seeking to help the hon. Gentleman this morning. He wondered whether officers would be given sufficient training to enable them to interpret the guidelines correctly. I can assure him that staff conducting interviews will have been thoroughly trained not only in the correct procedures to follow, but in how to conduct the interview.

Great care and attention has been paid to preparing the agency's staff to deal sensitively and sympathetically with the situations. All staff who meet the public will receive training in specialist interviewing skills developed and delivered with the help of Relate, which has substantial experience of interviewing people in sensitive situations.

I am quite satisfied that the way in which we have approached training has been with the understanding in mind that women in the most sensitive and difficult circumstances may be approached. That is precisely why officers have been trained extremely carefully.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that a woman might be interviewed alone, and he used the phrase "locked in a DSS office". I am sure that he will concede that that is not my intention or that of anyone involved in the agency. I can assure him, first, that any woman who so wishes can be accompanied to an interview, and need never be alone in those circumstances. Secondly, there is no question of anyone being locked in the DSS office to complete the giving of information.

The work that we have completed on the requirement to co-operate has been carried out with the assistance of the National Council for One-Parent Families and the Child Poverty Action Group. I pay tribute to Sue Slipman and Fran Bennett, who have been extremely helpful. I do not suggest in any way that either organisation has agreed with the Government on every jot or tittle of the legislation, but they have understood what we were trying to do and how we have been trying to make our procedures as fair and resonable as possible. They have helped us immeasurably in looking at the forms, the guidelines and the statement that women would receive before interview informing them of their rights. They have been reassured of our intentions at every stage, just as the House was previously reassured.

The steps we have taken demonstrate the intentions behind the legislation. The training undertaken with Relate is part of that process, designed to reassure on the way that we handle the work.

The hon. Gentleman also suggested that the reduced benefit direction may be given at the whim of an officer in the Child Support Agency. That will not be the case. It may reassure him if I detail the steps before any reduced benefit direction might be taken.

If a parent or a parent's partner claims benefit or is in receipt of benefit, a maintenance application form will be sent out by the Benefits Agency or the Child Support Agency for completion. With that initial form requiring that an application for child maintenance should proceed, the accompanying letter includes the following provision:

"Under child support law you are required to apply for child support maintenance and to provide information to allow us to recover child support maintenance, unless doing so would put either you or any children living with you at risk of suffering harm or undue distress. If you believe you have good reasons on these grounds not to apply for child support maintenance, please let us know."

At the first step, a parent is informed that if she is in difficult circumstances we are there to assist.

The help notes that accompany that letter, under the section headed, "Absent parent's details" state clearly:

"You will not be required to fill in this form if there is a risk of harm or undue distress occurring to you, or any children living with you, as a result of your providing information about the other parent, or authorising the Secretary of State to seek maintenance for you."

If we had not been genuine in our intentions concerning the legislation, and if it had been a large cost-saving exercise, surely the warnings would not have been published. Those warnings are included because we understand the circumstances with which we are dealing. We wish to make it clear that, if there is any problem of the manner described by the hon. Gentleman, consideration will be given to our waiving the right to co-operate and pursue maintenance.

When the maintenance application form is returned with the absent parent details uncompleted or incomplete —or if it is not returned—a parent with care will be asked to attend an interview or will be visited at home or, if necessary, at work. The hon. Gentleman suggested that that was a form of pursuance—not so. It gives the woman maximum opportunity to be seen where she wants to be seen so that the matters can be discussed.

If, at that stage, a parent with care shows good cause why she should withhold details of the absent parent—because she has satisfied an officer that there is a reasonable chance of harm or undue distress—no further action will be taken. If she fails to show good reason why she should withhold details of the absent parent or fails to attend for interview, a letter is sent on behalf of the Secretary of State to tell her that she has not shown good reason for failing to co-operate. The parent then has six weeks in which to consider her position and make further representations to us.

If, at the end of those six weeks, the parent with care has either not co-operated or failed to show good reason, the case is referred to a child support officer, who considers all the details afresh. That officer will then write again to the parent with care and give a further 14 days in which to comply with the requirement to co-operate or give good reasons for not doing so.

After that 14-day period, if, after careful consideration, a child support officer is satisfied that there is no reason to waive the requirement to co-operative, that officer may then issue a reduced benefit direction and send a copy to the parent with care. The hon. Gentleman wondered whether, at that stage, the officer would consider the welfare of the child. Regard to the welfare of the child can be considered even at that stage—even if no co-operation with the agency has been forthcoming, and the ability to issue a reduced benefit direction has come into play. The reduced benefit direction can be stopped even at that stage if an officer considers that the welfare of the child will be adversely affected. Once the reduced benefit direction has been applied, a further appeal process is still allowed.

There is a lengthy period during which a parent's case would be considered by a number of different people before any consideration were given to a reduced benefit direction. At each stage, there would be time for a parent with care to consider her position, and advice would be open to her, from her own sources and elsewhere, on whether it would be right for her to proceed in the way in which she should.

I must make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that more than adequate cover is provided in a situation in which a woman might be unclear or unsure in any way. No sudden, out-of-the-blue, reduction of benefit will be announced. Before that step is taken, a variety of opportunities offer the chance to consider what course of conduct has been followed and why co-operation with the agency is the better step.

I should like to go through the guidelines that we have issued, in the same manner as the hon. Gentleman did. He wondered why we had not spelt out even more clearly the details relating to harm or undue distress, and why we left it at the dictionary definition. We have done so precisely because we do not wish to exclude any circumstance from our consideration.

If we try to provide an exhaustive list of examples and to define too tightly the term "harm or undue distress", there is a danger that we might miss some circumstances in which harm or undue distress is caused to parents who come before us. We made the definition as wide as possible

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

because we wanted to leave all the options open to ensure that officers would be able to consider all the cases on an individual basis.

The sequence of events that I have just set out is detailed in the guidelines, which we have published. We made them available precisely because we wanted those who advised women to know what the precise circumstances would be. We have tried to be as open as possible in dealing with the circumstances. Paragraph 5 sets out in detail the way in which an application will be treated. It shows that we want the agency to act with good intent.

Paragraph 6 clearly sets out the opportunities of appeal. A woman need be under no fear that a sudden reduced benefit direction will come upon her with no warning, leaving her with no opportunity to do anything about it. The hon. Gentleman said that several important parts of paragraph 7 should be "borne in mind". That phrase means exactly what it says—the issues are to be in officers' minds at all times as they deal with people who come before the agency. The welfare of any children must be considered. The parent with care has a right to be believed unless what she says is inherently contradictory or improbable.

A reduced benefit direction is a strong sanction and will have an important impact on the income of a parent with care. It is very much a last resort, not something that will come quickly to an officer's mind. It is there to remind him of the impact of a benefit directive. As the hon. Gentleman said, the guidelines state.

"a reduced benefit direction should not be counted in any benefit saving statistics."

That section was designed deliberately to provide a reassurance that the benefit direction will not be included in any targets.

We are caught in a cleft stick—if we had not included such a provision in the guidelines, the hon. Gentleman would have asked, "What about the savings that will be made under the scheme? The Government will try to ensure that plenty of women are placed in that position so that savings can be made." In order to make it clear that that is not our intention, and will not be the case, we have included that passage in the guidelines. Once we have done so, the hon. Gentleman picks on it as one of the reasons for the measure, so we cannot win.

All that I can do is to ask the hon. Gentleman to accept my assurance—as I know he will—that we will not make any savings, which are not the point of the measure and will not be included in any targets. We set out the points to be borne in mind as we wanted to show what officers should consider when they are talking to parents with care who may have difficulties.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to paragraph 12, which deals with the fact that a number of matters must be made clear to the parent with care. It states that the Child Support Agency

"exists to help her obtain maintenance".

I have dealt with the issue of income support. A parent with care who said that there was nothing in the measure for her would be told that there is. We ask her to consider not just short-term, but medium and long-term, factors. We ask her to consider what she will want to do when the children are older and at school. If she wants to return to work, maintenance will help her. Acquiring maintenance at an early stage will open up her options for the future.

The guidelines state:

"she need not see the absent parent",

which is absolutely right. The Child Support Agency operates as a buffer if a woman does not want to have any contact with the absent parent. While I recognise that there will be a number of circumstances in which her address will be known, there will be occasions when she will have moved away and will not want any contact, but will still feel that a man has an obligation to maintain her child. We make it clear that, in those circumstances, we act for her. We can collect the maintenance from the other parent and deal with the administration; the money will be paid to us and then paid to the woman. We can reassure her that she will not have to have contact with the absent parent if she does not want to see him.

The next part of the paragraph states that the absent parent will not be given her address or even information about the town in which she lives, which is absolutely right. The system that we have devised ensures that all correspondence goes out not from individual Benefit Agency offices in towns up and down the country but only from six regional centres. That means that an absent parent who may be looking for his former partner in circumstances in which she does not wish him to find her cannot even discern from the address of the letter from the Child Support Agency where she might be. We have tried to cover that as well. Everything in paragraph 12 is designed to enable an officer to tell a woman the sort of points that we have considered on her behalf, and that is why it is there.

Then we go into the circumstances that we have detailed in paragraph 13 and beyond, setting out some examples. In it, we stress our understanding of the difficult nature of some of the interviews and some of the situations in which we find women. We say:

"The interview to discuss this must be handled with care and sensitivity—many PWCs will be genuinely distressed about having to discuss the circumstances surrounding a former relationship. It will, however, be necessary to obtain enough information to enable a decision to be made about the case."

That is it in a nutshell. That is the point between us.

The gist of the hon. Gentleman's argument was that he feels that in some circumstances, there should be almost automatic right of non-disclosure and, providing that certain words are used by a woman, that will automatically ensure that no further steps are taken. I cannot think that that is the correct way to proceed, or that it would be a positive step. The guidelines show flexibility in implementing the policy sensitively.

It would not be useful to have a list of good grounds after which no discussion could take place. That could lead to problems by spelling out just what an absent parent might need to do, or say, or threaten to do, just to avoid maintenance. That is why we feel that it is better to leave it as we do, setting out clearly how we feel about harm and undue distress, and saying how officers will be trained. I hope that that shows the hon. Gentleman that we feel that an automatic right is not correct.

In setting out the circumstances afterwards, all that I ask the hon. Gentleman and others to do is to use their plain common sense about obvious circumstances that, when information is presented to officers, will enable them to act straightforwardly and say that there is no doubt that

there is good cause why they should not pursue maintenance on the woman's behalf, and will not do so. I am clear that, in the vast majority of cases that come before officers, they will be able to make that judgment, sensitively and correctly.

In the paragraphs after that, we detail some examples. The list is not designed to be exhaustive because we do not wish to exclude anything. I ask any reasonable person reading the guidelines to draw the inference that these are circumstances in which officers will act with consideration and sensitivity and where anyone given a reasonable presentation of the facts will respond by saying, "That is enough. This need go no further. No problem. We shall not be pursuing maintenance in the circumstances that you describe." That is what we have tried to set out.

The minimum number of questions will be asked to enable officers to reach a decision that tells them that those grounds have been satisfied. There is no desire to be over-intrusive. All that officers need to do is simply to establish that the requirement behind the Act has been satisfied, and that reasonable cause has been shown. In the varying circumstances that have been brought to us, a judgment will be made in each case as to how much information is provided. It will depend entirely on the circumstances.

We deliberately try to cover many aspects in paragraph 41. The hon. Gentleman spoke of the mentally ill or handicapped. I appeal to his common sense and obvious decency. He must understand that an officer will be in a position to judge in such a case just how much information that person will be able to give and at what stage he or she will be able to say that there is no need to go any further.

We must remember that an interview is not necessary in all cases. If sufficient information is provided in the form in the first place to enable the officer to form the judgment that there will be no question of pursuing maintenance because reasonable grounds have already been established, then some interviews may not need to take place. I suggest that, when dealing with the mentally ill or the handicapped, all the officers will be able to decide at what stage any questioning should ease because there is no need to pursue it. That is not designed to imply that officers or the agency will press or harass the mentally ill or the handicapped to pursue maintenance for our purposes.

There are other circumstances that are described in the paragraphs that the hon. Gentleman went through, but the same general principles apply. As for access and contact, the position is, as the hon. Gentleman is aware—

It being Eight o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to Order [26 March].

Animal Aunts

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

8 am

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): I am grateful for the opportunity at this early hour in the morning to raise the important subject of the treatment of Animal Aunts by the Department of Social Security. I shall start by explaining what the firm does. If a family has a pet or pets, whether dogs, cats, fish, a pony or whatever, and the family goes on holiday, Animal Aunts arranges for an animal carer to go to the family's home and to stay there while it is on holiday to look after the animal or animals and the house.

The firm was set up in 1987 under an enterprise allowance scheme. It obviously found a valuable niche in the market because it has prospered greatly. The aunts or uncles are placed in all parts of the country. When a family contacts the firm and says, "We would like someone to look after our animals while we are away on holiday", the aunt travels to the family's home and stays there while it is away. She is paid by the family, not by Animal Aunts. Over the six years or so since the firm began, it has found about 10,000 clients and it has about 300 animal carers. As I have said, it arranges for them to go to the homes of the clients to look after their pets. The firm provides a useful social service.

What does the Department of Social Security want to do? After six years of the firm's existence, the Department has decided that it believes that the animal carers are not self-employed, although that was the basis on which the firm was set up. As I have said, it was established under an enterprise allowance scheme with the full co-operation of the Department of Employment. For six years the Inland Revenue has agreed that the carers are self-employed. Customs and Excise has similarly agreed that that is the position. The Department of Employment set it up initially, it being the structure of the business plan that the carers should be self-employed. And so they have been for six years. Only then does the Department of Social Security say, "No, we believe that under the 1978 regulations dealing with the categorisation of earnings, the carers should be employed. We shall say to Animal Aunts, 'You must pay us the relevant national insurance contributions.'" I understand that the Department is asking Animal Aunts to pay those contributions from 1990 to the present day.

The results will be disastrous. The firm will go out of business and the 300-odd carers will lose their jobs. Everything that the Government are trying to build up, and have successfully built up under the enterprise allowance scheme, will be destroyed. It is a classic example. It is astonishing—almost not to be believed—that a Conservative Government, having set the firm up under an enterprise allowance scheme, should then decide to destroy it. The Department is seeking to destroy that company at a time when there are 3 million unemployed, we are emerging from the longest and deepest recession that almost anybody can remember, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just launched a campaign to get rid of burdens on business and has instructed my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to make one Minister responsible for deregulation.

My hon. Friend the Minister may say, "There is nothing that we can do. That is the law, and we must obey

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

the law." But it is not the law; it is an interpretation by my hon. Friend's Department of a regulation—and in my view, it is a false interpretation. Presumably I am supported in that view by the Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise, and the Department of Employment—who for six years have gone along with the idea of animal carers being self-employed persons.

Time does not allow for close textual analysis of the relevant statutory instrument, the Social Security (Categorisation of Earners) Regulations 1978, but I draw the attention of my hon. Friend to schedule 1, part I. As is so often the case with regulations, the regulations are written in such a complicated way and have so many overlapping qualifications that although it is easy to find one part which appears to support one's argument, it is equally easy to find another part which does not.

Paragraph 2 of column (A) of the regulations obviously applies, as it uses the words

"where the person employed is supplied by or through some third person".

However, that is preceded by wording stating that the employee

"is under obligation to render personal service and is subject to supervision, direction or control, or to the right of supervision, direction or control, as to the manner of the rendering of such a service".

Clearly, that does not apply. An Animal Aunt is in my home at this moment, as I speak—and I have no control over that person. I only say, "I have six dogs. Look after them using your professional knowledge, in the way that you think best."

I have no supervision and am not physically present. I have no control over that person. My right of direction is exercised only in so far as I say, "Look after these animals."

Nor does the firm of Animal Aunts, which is even further removed from my house, have any supervision or control. The interpretation of my hon. Friend's Department is therefore wrong.

Even if there were some doubt, I would want it exercised as a principle by all Departments throughout Whitehall that where there is any doubt about the applicability of a regulation, the benefit of that doubt shall go to the side of the argument that is producing the jobs and the wealth creation—not the other way around, as my hon. Friend's Department seek to do in this case.

If doubt existed, presumably the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise would not have agreed that animal carers are self-employed and the Department of Employment would not have helped to establish the firm in the first place under the enterprise allowance scheme. Self-employment was the basis of the company's structure. We would not still be arguing the case six years on if doubt did not exist.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, there is a parallel case. Let us suppose that a farmer goes on holiday, requiring a stockman or herdsman to look after the stock while he is away. That stockman or herdsman is rightly regarded as self-employed, but he is doing exactly the same job for animals outside as most animal carers do for animals inside—although animal carers also look after outside animals if they have to. There is another element of doubt: the herdsman or stockman has agreed to be self-employed, yet for some reason, after six years my hon. Friend's Department is saying that animal carers should not be regarded as self-employed.

There is a difference between the relationship between the agency Animal Aunts and animal carers, and a normal employer-employee relationship. In the former case there is no discipline and grievance procedure, no provision for notice, and no regular or assured hours of work. Animal Aunts, for example, is allowed to arrange for a substitute if an "animal aunt"—for instance, the one whom I had arranged to look after my dogs—is unable to turn up. The arrangement would not be made by the agency. The "animal aunt" whom I had hired and who could not turn up would pay the other one personally; payment would not be made by the agency.

These "aunts"—it is a ludicrous name—are in business on their own account. There is a financial risk; in fact, a case is in progress now. An aunt who looked after some pets in Scotland was not paid by the family. In such cases, the aunt does not go back to the agency and say, "I want my money"; she—or he—must get the money from the family for whom the work was done. Aunts also pay their own insurance. In one case—there are a number of others—an animal under the control of an aunt got out of control and bit a teenager. The teenager sued the aunt, not the agency.

There is no doubt in my mind, at any rate, that these people are self-employed. But even if my hon. Friend does not agree with my opinion, she cannot deny that there is doubt about the matter. I think it extraordinary that she should seek to exercise her judgment on that doubt against a company which creates jobs and wealth.

My hon. Friend's Department has displayed some of the most objectionable aspects of bureaucracy in its handling of the matter. First, it has shown an extraordinary combination of dilatoriness with a ferocious persistence in hounding the firm. My hon. Friend made a noise when I used the word "dilatoriness". I have a letter here: its authors took five and a half months to answer a letter from the lawyer acting for Animal Aunts. On 28 August 1990, they wrote—I speak from memory—"Thank you for your letter of 13 March. I am sorry we have not replied earlier." They did not explain why they had not done so. The firm had to hire accountants and lawyers and fire off letters; the Department of Social Security did not even bother to reply and then did not explain why it had not done so, but it still goes on hounding the firm.

The matter has been dragging on for six years. I think it intolerable that a Government Department should hound a firm for so long without resolving the problem: it has had to come to the Floor of the House because of the Department's threats. The letters are so carelessly written that, even after two years, there are fundamental mistakes. I have one letter in which the writer—a civil servant in my hon. Friend's Department—says that of course Animal Aunts are paid by the agency. That is a fundamental misunderstanding of the matter, even after two years of investigation.

Is my hon. Friend happy that an official in her Department, or the Contributions Agency, can decide to attack this firm? What can the firm do then? It can refer the case to an inquiry. But the inquiry is not an adjudicative one; it is only investigative. The inquiry therefore looks at the original decision made by an official in my hon. Friend's Department. It then goes back to her Department and another official in her Department decides whether to

uphold or overturn the original decision of an official in her Department. In other words, the Department is judge and jury in its own case. That must be wrong.

I tried to get statistics from my hon. Friend regarding the percentage of cases in which the Department had ever overturned decisions. As far as I could gather, in 85 per cent. of cases the Department, perhaps not surprisingly, had reinforced the original decision. I do not think that that is the right way to judge a case upon which somebody's livelihood depends.

As for the huge expense incurred, this firm amounts, really, to just two or three women somewhere in Hampshire. They had to hire lawyers and accountants. They instructed a barrister to represent them at the inquiry. I understand that they have spent thousands of pounds, just this year alone, on fending off the attacks of my hon. Friend's Department.

After I had set out much the same complaints as I have made in this debate, my hon. Friend wrote me a letter of some 1,000 words. I had said in my letter to her that she was about to destroy 250 to 300 jobs and to put a firm out of business. My hon. Friend's 1,000-word letter in reply contains not a single word about the loss of jobs, the worry and hassle for the business, the expense to the firm, or the firm being made to close down. No attempt was made even to answer the argument I put to her about the parallel between the relief stockman and the animal carers. Although there was not a single word about all that, my hon. Friend devoted a whole paragraph to saying that her officials were doing very well and that I must not attack them for hounding this company.

That is the sort of insensitivity and crass behaviour that infuriates businesses and individuals and which the Prime Minister is trying to sort out by means of the deregulation campaign. This is important for Animal Aunts, but it is also important as a signal to the outside world that people can take seriously what we are trying to do about removing burdens from business. I hope that my hon. Friend can give me some comfort on both grounds.

8.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) for providing an opportunity for me to respond to the points that he has somewhat vehemently raised in the case of the firm of Animal Aunts, and also for the opportunity this gives me to say something about the importance that I attach generally to the correct determination under the law of individuals' employment status for national insurance, while at the same time seeking to ensure that the mechanisms for doing so are not unduly bureaucratic or burdensome.

This case is all about whether pet and animal sitters —or "aunts", as they are called—supplied by the firm Animal Aunts are to be treated as self-employed earners responsible for their own national insurance contributions or, as my hon. Friend vigorously contends, are to be treated as employed earners for national insurance purposes, with the firm of Animal Aunts being liable to pay full class 1 contributions on their behalf.

Class 1 national insurance contributions are, of course, the most widely paid class of contribution, paid by virtually everyone in a job and by office holders, such as company directors or, indeed, Members of Parliament. Well over a million employers regularly deduct and pay over these contributions to the tune of nearly £40 billion per year. It is virtually part of our culture to pay these contributions. If anything, attention often focuses on instances in which employers fail to meet their obligations to pay contributions in respect of their employees. We have seen, for instance, reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General pinpointing certain shortcomings in the contribution collection system, and it is to the public credit of my Department's Contributions Agency that it is addressing these with vigour, and is meeting or exceeding the various high-level targets that are published.

In saying that, I seek not to undermine my hon. Friend's stance in the Animal Aunts case, but simply to place it in context. I should also like to remind the House of the purpose of national insurance contributions, which are at the very centre of this debate.

Unlike taxes, which are raised by the Crown with the consent of Parliament, to provide moneys for the general purposes of government, the national insurance system is entirely separate, providing pensions for the retired and short-term contributory benefits for those who are sick or unemployed. These benefits are covered by the national insurance fund, which is directly financed by the contributions of employers and people in employment. As its name denotes, the national insurance fund is an insurance fund over which the Secretary of State has powers of control and management. Entitlement to benefits from the fund depends upon the amount and class of contributions paid.

There is an important distinction here. Employed earners who have paid full class 1 contributions are entitled to the full range of contributory benefits. However, the class 2 contributions paid by self-employed persons do not earn entitlement to unemployment benefit or to SERPS. Moreover, self-employed persons who suffer an accident at work cannot qualify for disablement benefits under the industrial injuries scheme, so it is very important from the individual contributor's point of view that he or she be correctly categorised for national insurance purposes. We have heard much about the interests of the firm, but we need to consider also the interests of individuals and the benefits that may or may not accrue according to which contributions they pay.

Indeed, a considerable number of disputes arise from cases where workers have been treated as self-employed persons, suffered an accident at work and then found that they are not entitled to benefits under the industrial injuries scheme. Of course, in the vast majority of cases it is abundantly clear which is the correct class of contribution due: usually a person is either working clearly under contract of service to an employer or is on business on his own account, and therefore an independent contractor.

However, the Government are conscious that there are grey areas, and, picking up the deregulation point that my hon. Friend made, we have sought to make it as easy as possible for people to get authoritative advice on their status. Thus, in each tax and social security office one person is responsible for all inquiries and decisions about employment status. Anyone in work can get a written decision on their employment status from either the Inland Revenue or the DSS. My Department and the Inland Revenue have got together to produce a joint leaflet giving extra guidance.

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

I will come later to the special position of employment agencies, but, while on the subject of deregulation, I should just like to mention my Department's employers panel, with whom we consult regularly on a wide range of issues. The next meeting of the panel is to be on 25 May 1993. Sub-groups of the main panel meet on specific issues, and small businesses are represented on the panel. Arising from our commitment to the Government's deregulation initiative, we are eliminating, from this April, some annoying differences in definitions of earnings and expenses between tax and national insurance.

I have described in some detail the general provisions that govern employment status, but there is a particular provision that is relevant to this case. It deals with the special circumstances of employment agencies that supply workers to third parties. By way of further background, the House should be aware that the special provisions embodied in the Social Security (Categorisation of Earners) Regulations exist with the aim of achieving parity of treatment for workers under the social security scheme.

Thus, for example, a relief typist or secretary supplied by an agency and working alongside other office workers under similar conditions is treated as an employed earner for the purposes of national insurance by virtue of the regulations, notwithstanding that she would otherwise be a self-employed earner, because she is not under a contract of service to either the agency or client firm.

Following a query from one of the "aunts" late in 1987, my Department made detailed inquiries into the terms of engagements and eventually concluded late in 1989 that the provisions of the regulations to which I have referred were satisfied, and that the aunts should be treated as employed earners for national insurance purposes.

I should like to say a little about the Contributions Agency's conclusions. Regulations 2(1) and (2) of the Social Security (Categorisation of Earners) Regulations provide for persons to be treated as employed earners in respect of any employment falling within column A of part 1 of schedule 1 provided the person is not within the exceptions specified in the corresponding paragraph of column B.

It was concluded that the aunts fell within paragraph 2 of column A, but that the exceptions in column B did not apply. In particular, one condition that had to be satisfied was that there was no on-going financial interest on the part of the third person. However, under the terms of the contract with the client, Animal Aunts collects further fees if an engagement is extended or renewed at a later date, and therefore maintains an on-going financial interest in the employment. Subject to the ruling being operated by the firm, the Department agreed not to pursue the question of arrears at that time.

Rulings of this sort are administrative in nature and carry no force in law. However, there is the right to have the question formally determined by the Secretary of State, as provided by section 17 of the Social Security Administation Act 1992. The Secretary of State's function is to determine a question raised by a contributor. There is no provision for the Department to raise any question itself, or to participate in the proceedings as an interested party.

The jurisdiction is not to adjudicate in a dispute between the contributor and the Department, but to investigate afresh all the facts relevant to the question and to reach a conclusion as to its appropriate determination in the light of all the relevant facts and applicable law.

In carrying out those functions, the Secretary of State has power to appoint a person to hold an inquiry into the question and report to him. Such inquiries are inquisitorial and form part of the process of determination. The possibility of a formal determination in the Animal Aunts case was quickly mentioned in ensuring correspondence between the Department and the firm's accountants, but the correspondence became somewhat protracted as the accountants queried the application of the regulations and the Department responded.

Far from hounding the firm as my hon. Friend has suggested, I think that it would be right to say that the Department took considerable time and trouble to examine every representation made on the matter, but finally remained of the view that the facts did not allow another conclusion to be reached. It was more than two years later that the firm eventually applied for the matter to be formally determined last May. Further delays took place, but the inquiry was held last month, and I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the inquirer's report and recommendation have been received, and it was possible for the formal decision to be given yesterday. This has been dispatched to Animal Aunts and will, I hope, arrive in the first post this morning, but I have pleasure in informing the House that the "aunts" who were the subject of the application have been found not to be included, or treated as included, in the category of employed earner for the purposes of social security Acts——

Mr. Sproat: Hear, hear.

Miss Widdecombe: ——and, on that announcement, I am pleased to hear the first kind words in this debate from my hon. Friend. In other words, the Secretary of State found in favour of Animal Aunts. If I may say so, I think that that is particularly significant, given my hon. Friend's concern about the independence of the decision-making process when the Secretary of State might be held by some to be judge in his own cause.

It is not uncommon for the Secretary of State to overturn the Department's view. The "improvement" rate —as it is called—by the Secretary of State, for instance in 1991-92, was such that 36 per cent. of employment status decisions resulted in the Department's view being overturned. That is a very much higher percentage than my hon. Friend suggested.

My hon. Friend made the point that where there is reasonable doubt about the applicability of a regulation, the benefit of that doubt should be in favour of the side that creates or preserves jobs and profitability. There are wider issues here which it would not be appropriate for me to try to answer, but I do think that if one were making such a proposition then an equally strong argument could be made for giving the benefit of the doubt in such a way as would protect the benefit rights of the individuals concerned.

Finally, I pay tribute not only to my hon. Friend's enthusiasm in pursuing the Animal Aunts case so vigorously, but also to the entrepreneurial spirit of its proprietor. Let there be no doubt about that: the last thing my Department wants to do is to harass small businesses.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 2 April 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Iraq

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

9.34 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): We have started our debate, as we always do, with Prayers, and as I said the Lord's Prayer this morning, the words, "deliver us from evil" struck hard in my heart because it is an evil upon which I ask the House to concentrate.

May I match that Christian prayer with the cry that is on the lips of the marsh Arabs and which echoes Allah's words revealed in the Koran 1500 years ago:

"He is Allah most gracious: we have believed in Him, and on Him we have put our trust, so soon will you know which of us it is that is in manifest error. Say, 'See you? If your stream be some morning lost . . . who can then supply you with clear flowing water?'"

The House has been kind to me in allowing me time for debate over the two years during which I have been working for the people of Iraq, and especially for the people of southern Iraq. It is their needs on which I ask the Minister to concentrate. I shall compare them a little with the needs of northern Iraq, which are large. Today I want to focus upon the forgotten people, the marsh Arabs, the Ma'dan, and the people who are sheltering in those marshes with them. In all, there are about 600,000 people.

The debate is timely, because it takes place in the wake of a special meeting that the Foreign Secretary and subsequently the Prime Minister held with the Iraqi National Congress. The Minister of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is here for the debate, was also present. I should like to put on the record the keynote points that the delegation representing Iraqis from the north, the centre and the south through membership of the new Iraqi National Congress, which is fully representative of all the opposition bodies, raised with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary on 30 March.

First, they called for a new United Nations Security Council resolution to enact resolution 688. Secondly, they asked for the full implementation of resolution 688, and they asked the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to concentrate on discussing methods of reversing the current repressive measures instituted by Saddam's regime.

Thirdly, they asked for the removal of the extensive and ecologically destructive activities of the regime in the marshes, such as on the dams and drainage channels. I shall return to that. Fourthly, they asked for the removal of the economic blockage against Iraqi Kurdistan in the north, especially the denial of petroleum products, without which people there cannot keep warm. They also asked for the cessation of arbitrary executions in Baghdad, the release of all political prisoners and the return of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deportees to their homes all over Iraq.

Manifestly, these last two right and proper requests are beyond us in the House just now, but the extension of the no-fly zones to include all of Iraq is a possibility. More important would be the adoption by the Security Council of the recommendation of the special rapporteur on human rights in Iraq to place human rights monitors all over Iraq. In the wake of that, the delegation requested a security zone, a safe haven, in southern Iraq. Finally, they asked for a war crimes trial for Saddam Hussein himself.

I know of the sympathetic hearing and the deep understanding which the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister, the Minister of State and Foreign Office officials extended to the Iraqi National Congress at the meeting. This morning gives me an opportunity to put on record in *Hansard* some of the reasons that lie behind the congress's requests. They are the sufferings of the people in the marshes; the destruction of a wonderful historic part of the world that can never be re-created; and the problems that face the United Nations in its legal tangle, which seemingly prohibits it from helping the Arabs who are locked into the marshes and facing destruction by Saddam Hussein's forces.

A little while ago, by courtesy of Iran, I and my colleagues in Tehran and in the south of Iran managed to arrange a 10-day visit by a very brave journalist from *The Observer*—its senior foreign reporter, Shyam Bhatia. His report was published in five pages of *The Observer* five days ago. Last week, the paper allowed me to describe my thoughts in an article. The situation is truly desperate. Most days, I get information from the marshes by fax, and sometimes by telephone, too. The people there report that things are terrible.

The work that I have been carrying out has been to do with organising medical and food aid, so the medical needs of the area land on my desk each week. As I wrote in *The Observer* on Sunday, cholera has now started in the marshes—a terrible death, which we have not known in the west for many years. Hardly any food is available because of the blockade by Government forces. Skin and gut infections, diarrhoea, typhoid fever, food poisoning, eye diseases, conjunctivitis, gynaecological and pelvic inflammatory diseases, dental and gum diseases and sunstroke—all these are taking their toll. I have been in the marshes when the temperature exceeded 50 deg C, and there is no shelter, giving rise to sunstroke. All these diseases are widespread and largely untreated.

Polluted water is all there is to drink. Last autumn, it appeared that Saddam Hussein was poisoning the waters, but knowledgeable people, scientists, tell me that it is not necessary to poison the marsh waters. Just draining them is enough; the water level becomes so low that the salts and acids in the water become concentrated, and that poisons the people. There is nowhere to put sewage, human or animal, so everyone I know in the marhes has constant dysentery. Children cannot be immunised; there is no cold chain of refrigeration to get the vaccines in, so there are no vaccines in the marshes. Polio, measles, whooping cough, mumps and other childhood diseases are rampant. The children are stunted because breast milk is in short supply owing to severe maternal malnutrition. Without even the most primitive obstetric services, mothers just die in labour.

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

On top of all this, there is constant military bombardment. The famine has been caused not just by natural factors or a lack of water; we are talking about a planned destruction of a people and of their wonderful environment. Now that the marshes have dried out, it is easy to use incendiary bombs. In January, February and March, telegrams from the marshes to me described villages, people and animals being burnt to death. The rice farms that supplied the staple diet for the marsh Arabs have been burnt out. The fish have died—they used to provide protein—and the water buffalo have just fled because of the bombardments.

The marshes are losing water fast. I do not know whether the latest suggestion by two American senators would be useful—bombing the dams to release the Tigris and the Euphrates again.

We are talking about an historic area. The House Library contains a book called "Ancient Iraq", written by Charles Roux and first published in 1964. Updated in 1992, it has gone through four reprints. It reminds us of the history of this part of Iraq, going right back to the Sumerians 6,000 years ago. After them came the Akkadians, and the Assyrians, and so we can recall the waters of Babylon, beside which people sat down and wept. Echos of the Old Testament are to be heard throughout the history of the Iraqi marshes, that unique part of the world where the Tigris and Euphrates have provided the great flow of water which has given these people a way of life.

I know that the Ma'dan pre-date the Arab invasion of Iraq. They are a unique and historic people. Their antique language pre-dates Arabic, which differs from it significantly.

This area contains a great deal of special wildlife. Hon. Members will recall Gavin Maxwell's wonderful book, "Ring of Bright Water", which was about an otter. Few will recall, however, that the otter, Mijbil, was discovered in and brought back from the marshes of Iraq. It was a unique variety of otter, common in the marsh areas. It is called lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli. It was a previously unknown species. The area also contains wild boar, various kinds of terrapin, some rare and threatened species of bird, such as the pigmy cormorant, dalmatian pelicans, marbled teal, red-breasted geese, lesser white-fronted geese, white-tailed and imperial eagles, Bara reed warblers, Iraqi babblers and grey hypercolius. Some of these birds are there all the year round and are specific to the area.

We should look at the marshes of Iraq as a wetland of unique importance. It is half the size of Switzerland, and it has survived for a long time as an area rich in all kinds of fish, some of which are probably unique to it. The world conservation monitoring centre recently declared the marshes of Iraq a site of primary ecological interest.

As the House knows, I have been describing the sufferings of the people in Iraq for nearly two years. If I turn now to the destruction of this wonderful environmental area, it is not because I have any less concern for the sufferings of the people—the more I visit, the more I learn, the more appalled I am by how harsh their suffering has become. But the world tends to say that these are just another group of suffering people—what can we do about them? So perhaps if we ask the world to think about the ecological impact, those who write letters about the destruction of the rain forest will bend their minds and hearts to the destruction of an area replicated nowhere else in the world and now being physically destroyed.

Last week, I received a fax from Ayatollah al-Hakim in Tehran. He told me of yet another new dam keeping the waters away from the marshes. In the west, we have become so used to reacting to television programmes and pictures that we may have forgotten to use our imaginations. Perhaps our imaginations are no longer vivid enough to understand the impact of this drainage on a people's heritage—a drainage so profound and so disgraceful that this land, above water for the first time in history, is becoming completely visible.

Saddam Hussein says that this drainage, which he now admits is happening, is for agricultural purposes, but scientists tell me that the land is of such poor quality that it will not sustain even one meagre harvest. It is not the sort of land that can create the wealth that will feed people; it is not land on which subsequent harvests will flourish. There will be just one meagre harvest and then no more.

In desperation, the Amar appeal, of which I am chairman, is conducting a major survey of the marshes. It will be spearheaded by the chairman of the wetlands committee of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, of which the United Kingdom and most member states of the United Nations are members. It is an unusual body, as it covers private organisations such as the World Wild Fund for Nature.

What will the survey consider, and why is it so critical? We will examine the evidence for recent changes in hydrology and other environmental conditions in the marshlands complex of southern Iraq. We will describe the environmental, ecological and human conditions before the hydrological modification and other changes in environmental character. We will assess the effects of hydrological and other environmental conditions in terms of changes to the flow regime, water quality, soil, vegetation and land use, fisheries and the habitat for wildlife, especially for endangered, rare and threatened species.

We will then evaluate the likely impacts of the changes on the maintenance of the ecological character and environmental quality, on the character of agriculture in the region and on human communities within the region, with particular reference to food security, the local economy, transport, health and social welfare, culture, education and amenity. We will look at human communities outside the region, with particular reference to environmental impacts, resource implications and heritage values, and will make recommendations for restoration and rehabilitation, where appropriate, of the ecological and environmental integrity of the area.

We will also look at more human aspects, such as education, and we hope to match the ecological side of the report, which will be spearheaded by Dr. Ed Maltby of Exeter university, to whom I have already referred, with a report that will be conducted under Professor David Morley, the immediate past head of the Institute of Child Health. His chapters will be buttressed by those on education.

It is vital that we carry out this work. The Iraqi environmental protection group, headed by Sayeed Jayfar and Ibrahim Uloom, pulled together and published in January this year all the known material on the destruction of the marshes and the drainage projects, and it makes disheartening reading. I know that, because the Security

Council held a special meeting for me in December, as I told this place in January, where I was able to show all the captured maps showing the irrigation and its consequences. But since then, nothing has been done, so we have asked the International Union for Nature Conservation —that great body—whether it will conduct the survey under its umbrella, and it is considering doing so.

At the moment, the director-general says that the Amar appeal is an inappropriate body to ask it to do so. I have, therefore, asked our Government and the Governments of the United States and Holland to apply, but, most important, two days ago, through the good offices of the president, Prince Philip, I was able to contact the World Wildlife Fund International in Geneva, where I found a home for this thinking—the director, Claude Martin, who was interested and who understood at once.

It seems that ecologists and environmentalists have been watching and waiting for a trigger that would enable them to act. Their concern is shared by us, and it matches the concern of the Amar appeal friends and supporters about the human aspect of the matter. I am very hopeful that the survey will provide those in authority throughout the world with the material that they may care to use to stop the destruction of the marshes and of the people in the marshes.

We believe that the study is an important matter. Meanwhile, as it proceeds—it has begun even though nobody has invited us to do so, because the scientists recognise the need for haste—the people die. This week, therefore, I met Dr. James Grant, the executive director of UNICEF, and 10 days ago I went to New York and saw Mr. Eliasson, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and begged for their help. I learned that the United Nations is not prepared to act. Resolution 688 covers the entirety of Iraq, and the member nation that proposed it, France, was firm and fierce in wording it, yet the United Nations has turned away from considering the marshes of Iraq and has thus condemned 600,000 people to certain death.

It is not just the starvation, illness or the lack of water which will result in human and wildlife extinction. Access routes run along the top of the dykes, which means that not only Land-Rovers but tanks can drive into the heart of the marshes. There is currently a brief cessation, because late March and early April always bring floods. Those floods are now hardly coming into the marshes, because the dykes have stopped the rivers, but none the less there is a little water. We believe that, when that water ceases, as it will in April and May, the killing fields will begin in earnest. The people inside are not armed to defend themselves. The ones whom I have seen on my own trips have just carried old rifles and few bullets.

I want to read only the last paragraph of a letter that I received yesterday from Mr. Eliasson from New York. He kindly says that it was a pleasure to meet me and that he admires my work, but that is not the point. He says:

> "As I explained in New York, the United Nations, in the present situation, is not in a position to assist directly in support of your concrete programmes."

That means no aid for the marshes, as we are the only people who are giving aid. He goes on:

> "I have, however, taken careful note of the proposed study of the marshes and will be consulting with my colleagues as to what we can do in this regard. The subject certainly deserves increased attention by potentially interested parties."

I know that the United Nations is the servant of its members, and that it is up to us to decide what we want to do. There is no shortage of material. The special rapporteur for human rights in Iraq, the former Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, delivered his report on 19 February. It made terrible reading. On 5 March, members voted on it and proposed a resolution, which was good. It was adopted by a vote of 46 for, one against and 16 abstentions. Again, they stated their deep concern about the grave violations of human rights by the Government of Iraq and said that these have led to a deterioration of the situation of the civilian population in southern Iraq, particularly in the southern marshes.

The motion states that the members express their

> "strong condemnation of the massive violations of human rights, of the gravest nature, for which the Government of Iraq is responsible, resulting in an all-pervasive order of repression and oppression which is sustained by broad-based discrimination and widespread terror, in particular:
>
> Summary and arbitrary executions, orchestrated mass executions and mass graves throughout Iraq, extrajudicial killings, including political killings, in particular in the northern region of Iraq, in southern Shiah centres and in the southern marsh area;
>
> The widespread routine practice of systematic torture in its most cruel forms;
>
> Enforced or involuntary disappearances, routinely practised arbitrary arrests and detention, including of women, the elderly and children and consistent and routine failure to respect due process and the rule of law;
>
> Suppression of freedom of thought, expression and association and violations of property rights;
>
> The unwillingness of the Government of Iraq to honour its responsibilities in respect of the economic rights of the population."

The motion goes on and on and on. It requests the Secretary-General

> "to take the necessary measures in order to send human rights monitors to such locations as would facilitate improved information flows and assessment and would help in the independent verification of reports on the situation of human rights within Iraq."

Knowledge, knowledge and more knowledge is what we are asked to provide. I am happy to give the United Nations the knowledge that it is not gaining for itself from the marshes. However, while the knowledge flows, people are dying and no aid will be given to the marshes in case that jeopardises the northern aid or creates other political tensions. The toehold in Basra recently achieved by UNICEF is the Deputy Secretary-General's sop to Cerberus. The marshes are surely the hell beyond the jaws of Cerberus.

I will end with a thought that came to me as I listened to Ayatollah Al-Hakim in Tehran. At the end of a meeting at 3 am, we were all very tired. I had just come from a four-hour meeting with a wonderful man—an Iranian appointed by the President of Iran to take responsibility for all Iran's relationships within Iraq—Mr. Agamohamadi. He was a former Member of Parliament before he was appointed by the President to his new task. He is a large ray of light on the horizon. He spent a month inside Iraq during the uprising under the care of Mr. Talabani. He saw the horrors. Some of the things he told me were indeed horrific. He said that we had seen nothing yet.

Mr. Agamohamadi went there and brought out some of the people who had been injured by the chemical bombs in the attack. He saw thousands of people being killed, running here and there, not knowing what to do or where to go. He saw many mothers killed with their babies held to their chests. He saw families of five or six killed together. He saw all that with his own eyes. He said that if a person

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

opposes Saddam's regime today, all his family will be in danger and under threat. It is impossible to calculate the number of missing people, because the number is unlimited. That short statement encapsulates the reason for my four-hour meeting with Mr. Agamohamadi.

Later, I spoke to Ayatollah Al-Hakim about that meeting. It was very late, and somehow his attention was drawn back to the early 1980s, when he was captured and imprisoned. He was placed in a deep cell with no light. It was damp and he had no water or food. He was taken out only to be tortured. He was tortured ferociously for weeks on end and after each torture session thrown back into the cell. The man who was in the cell before him had gone completely mad. Ayatollah Al-Hakim held on, and he said nothing. In the end, his torturers gave up on him after three months. They said that he must have had something rather curious wrong with him which meant that his flesh could not feel pain. He had not cried once, but their perception was not true: he felt it all.

After Ayatollah Al-Hakim had told me this, he turned to Sheik Mahmoodi and said, "I don't know why I'm talking like this. Sheik Mahmoodi had a much worse time than me." Sheik Mahmoodi told me what had happened to him and then said, "But that is little compared to what some people went through."

As we spoke, 300 people were entering Tehran from Iraq. They had been released from prison, which was astonishing. They had served 10, 11 or 12 years—we must remember that Saddam Hussein took control in 1979. Later in the week, they began to die because, as they left prison, they had been given thallium injections. To have hope dashed so cruelly is unbelievable.

I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, to the House and to anyone who will listen that this is a tyrant whose evil is unbelievable. If we fail to help, what right have we to say the Lord's Prayer, to seek delivery from evil for ourselves, so readily and happily each day? What right have we to look the Iraqi victims in the eye?

10.5 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am very glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has chosen the issue of south Iraq to feature in this Adjournment debate. She has rightly characterised the regime of Saddam Hussein as evil. As she has made so clear, the conditions in Iraq generally, and the conditions in south Iraq in particular, are dire and are brought about, at least in part, by the deliberate policy of an evil man.

My hon. Friend has visited the area frequently and she probably knows more about it than anyone else in the House. Her contribution to the relief of suffering in south Iraq has been very great. I am glad that she welcomed our meeting with representatives of the Iraqi National Congress. I met them, but, more important, so did my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister.

We very much welcomed the statements of the Iraqi National Congress to the effect that it looks forward to the introduction of a democratic and pluralistic system of government in Iraq and, more important perhaps, that it believes that Iraq should exist within her current frontiers and that the problems of minorities such as the Kurds in north Iraq should be addressed by way of autonomy rather than by creating an independent Kurdistan. We strongly supported that approach. I was glad that the Iraqi National Congress made it plain to us that it was not seeking the creation of an independent Kurdistan.

My hon. Friend has spoken about Iraq in general and about south Iraq in particular. It would be helpful if I were first to outline the general nature of our policy and then consider south Iraq.

In setting our general policy towards Iraq, we are governed by three major considerations: first, that Iraq should not be in a position to threaten the security and stability of the region; secondly, that Iraq must respect the sovereignty of Kuwait; and thirdly, that we must do what we can to bring an end to the repression by Saddam Hussein of the peoples of Iraq.

Those three general propositions are reflected in the detail of the Security Council resolutions. As my hon. Friend has made plain, there has been substantial non-compliance with the particular mandatory terms of the resolution. It may be helpful if I remind the House of the respects in which Saddam Hussein has fallen short of what is asked of him.

To start with, with regard to the frontier with Kuwait, Saddam Hussein has failed to participate in the last four meetings of the boundary demarcation commission. Police posts on Kuwaiti territory were removed only under pressure and there have been repeated statements by Iraqi officials implying that Kuwait is part of Iraq.

I now turn to the question of mass destruction. Iraq has not accepted Security Council resolution 707 or provided for final and complete disclosure of all aspects of weapons of mass destruction. It has not accepted Security Council resolution 715 or agreed to the long-term monitoring of its weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein has not complied with the resolutions on the return of detainees from Kuwait. Perhaps most important of all—this is the issue on which my hon. Friend dwelt—he has continued his policy of repression. Repression continues in southern Iraq. The internal embargo of the three northern Governments also continues. There is a complete denial of human rights throughout Iraq.

For those reasons and others, the Security Council has decided to continue with the policy of sanctions, and it will continue to do so for as long as we are justified in that policy by non-compliance with relevant resolutions. It is untrue to suggest that there has been any softening in the policy of western or coalition powers towards Iraq. We are determined to ensure compliance with all the relevant terms of the resolutions.

Much has been said about the condition of Iraqis in general. The condition of the Iraqi people is serious. However, it is important to remind the House that it is serious because of the deliberate policy of Saddam Hussein. The sanctions regime does not impose a prohibition on the importation of either food or medicines, and there is a provision for the approval of other humanitarian requirements. Many people say that the Iraqis do not have the money to pay for food and medicines. That is because Saddam Hussein has not agreed to the procedure laid down under Security Council resolutions 706 and 712. He is entitled to sell oil to the value of US $1·6 billion from which there will be moneys available to purchase food and medicines if that is what he chooses to do. For political reasons, he has determined not

to agree to the procedures laid down under those resolutions and, to that extent, he is wholly responsible for the plight of his own population.

I now turn specifically to south Iraq. My hon. Friend has highlighted in graphic terms the situation in the marshes and the abuse to which Saddam Hussein is subjecting the people of south Iraq as a deliberate policy. I accept the broad picture that she draws. There is a grave infringement of human rights. It is not entirely right to say that western and coalition powers or the United Nations have entirely disregarded what is going on.

Most dramatically, we have established a no-fly zone in which we participate. The object of the zone is to prevent Iraqi aircraft from being used in attacks against the population of south Iraq. That has been successful to the limited extent possible, in the sense that Iraqi aircraft no longer participate in attacks on people in south Iraq generally or in the marshes, and they cannot assist ground forces to that end. I make it plain that the coalition countries will not accept any interference by Iraq with the overflight of coalition aircraft over the marshes, and that a right of self-defence exists.

I also accept that the no-fly zone is not a total solution to the problem. Substantial Iraqi ground forces are involved in the marshes and the no-fly zone does not prevent their military action. The question that arises is whether we would be able or willing to create a safe haven in the way in which a safe haven was created in north Iraq. The answer to that is no, although I do not say that with any pleasure. There are substantial deployments of Iraqi troops in south Iraq and it is not plausible to suppose that they would voluntarily leave that area. If they left the area, it could be only as a result of the deployment of substantial coalition military power, probably ground forces. I cannot say to the House that the United Nations can do that.

That being so, we have to rely on the humanitarian policies of the United Nations and of other agencies. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and to the organisation with which she works, which has been by far the most active in the area. The memorandum of understanding negotiated by the United Nations is, we hope, being rolled forward and it will cover a further year. We hope very much that the United Nations will be able to establish a presence in south Iraq. I accept that the contribution made by that policy is not sufficient to meet the grave needs in south Iraq. I know that I have come to the end of the allotted time, so, although there is much more that I should say, I must end. I do so by congratulating my hon. Friend, first, on highlighting the issue and, secondly, on her personal contribution.

Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust

10.16 am

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The maintenance of free speech is the basis of everything we do in the House, and the use of Adjournment debates or debates generally to raise matters that are of great concern to our constituents is strongly cherished by hon. Members, especially with the growing habit of Ministers creating agencies or commercial units that remove responsibilities from them to a third party on the basis of a commercial interest.

When the national health service trusts were set up, many of us warned that the theory that one could bring about a major change in health care without first explaining and exploring the ways in which it could be done would lead to a considerable set of problems. I am sorry to say—I make it clear that I take no pleasure in this—that in my constituency, the Mid Cheshire hospital trust, which was one of the first trusts to be set up, has proved conclusively that, far from working, as the Secretary of State delights in telling us, national health service trusts are now running into considerable problems. The problems are becoming obvious to patients and to their families, and they are also having direct effects on health care.

When the Mid Cheshire trust was set up, the then Secretary of State for Health sent me a warm and reassuring letter. It is important to quote his words exactly:

"that establishment of a Trust will give clear benefits and improved quality of service to patients; that management has the skills and capacity—including strong, effective leadership, sufficient financial and personal management expertise and adequate information systems—to run the unit effectively; that senior professional staff, especially consultants, are involved in the management of the unit; that the Trust will be financially viable."

I should make it clear that that letter was written not by the present Secretary of State, but by the male who preceded her. The style of English does not change although Secretaries of State may change from time to time

I was then told:

"I am now writing to tell you that I have decided to establish The Mid Cheshire Hospitals as an NHS Trust, to become operational from 1 April 1991."

It is important to understand that Leighton hospital, which was the centre of the Mid Cheshire hospital trust, has consistently been underfunded. Physically, it is at the bottom of the Mersey region and, before the creation of the trust, it never received sufficient cash to deal with the real health care problems of the Crewe and Nantwich area.

When the move towards a trust was mooted, I asked general practitioners in the area whether they foresaw any great inward movement of patients which would somehow transform the trust's financial situation, having been assured that that was what was intended. Unfortunately, far from the hospital suddenly becoming magically viable—even with the extra sums of money donated by the region to set up the political stalking horse—although more patients were certainly treated, there was an overspend every year, and we are now approaching the second major crisis.

Initially—I suspect because it was an election year—it was somehow possible for the region to find an extra sum of money to assist the Mid Cheshire trust last year when

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

it had financial difficulties. We all knew what was happening; we knew that the trust was overspent and was madly trying to take money from its reserves and from other sources to try to balance the books. The executives were not especially secretive about it, although I received large numbers of reassuring letters telling me that they could not understand why I did not trust their financial doings, and that they were dealing with the problems more than adequately.

The chief executive wrote to me on 20 March 1992:

"You will be pleased to know that the Trust will meet all its financial obligations at the end of the financial year, including a virtual break-even position against budget. This is a result of the tight financial management of the Trust's affairs, which has prevented the potential for financial problems which was identified earlier in the financial year."

Anyone who deals with that district hospital knows that, whatever else is happening, the standard of health care is becoming a matter of considerable worry. That is due not to members of staff but to difficulties in specific areas. First, there is a problem with closed wards. Whatever the Department of Health says, the reality is that, before the trust was created, wards were open and, after its creation, a number of wards were closed. Before the trust was created, we had full use of all the wards; now, several are only partially used.

I am perfectly happy for the Minister to tell me that that is because we are so much more efficient; we wheel people in and out with such speed that they do not need wards or beds. That is a medical argument which can be defended in general medical terms, but the increasing evidence that this year we have reached a financial crunch cannot be defended.

Not for the first time, the trust is badly overspent; it is £2 million short of the amount required. It has held a number of talks with the regions and with other financial controllers within the NHS, according to evidence given to me by the Minister. The trust was then told that it must rapidly find £700,000—there was some suggestion that it was required to find it within two weeks. It could only meet that enormous overspend by shutting down facilities and beginning to sack staff, which has happened. That makes nonsense of all the information that has been handed out officially by the Mid Cheshire hospitals.

My constituents have found that there is enormous pressure on hospital services. The staff have had considerable and constant worries about their jobs. Although we were told that front-line staff would not go, there were already instances of re-evaluation—a nice word for moving people around—of nurses' jobs, which meant that many had lost their existing status and been moved to other jobs.

During the year, I received a number of statements, such as that the trust must carry over to subsequent financial years any over or underspending against its budget. I was also told that the likely outturn for Mid Cheshire hospital trust would be in the range of £100,000 either side of a break-even position against the budget. Frankly, that has not been our experience.

As a result, when the chief executive asked the regional hospital authority for extra money he was told, somewhat sharply, that it would not be forthcoming. I can only assume that his naivety had not made it clear to him that the money made available at the time of the general election will not be made available when there are four years to go before the Government have to put their health policies to the test of the local populace.

The role of the regional hospital authority ought to be considered in great detail. There is no independent way for the actions of anyone within the national health service to be monitored properly. Luckily, there are forms of monitoring for the care given by medical professionals. If we are to believe the Conservative Government's theories, the running of trusts ought to be transparent, but they are far from clear.

Within our region, the chairman, Sir Donald Wilson, has taken some major decisions, which have led to considerable questioning from elected members. He decided, with his colleagues, that it would be a good idea if the regional hospital trust authority bought a very expensive flat and furnished it, because it would somehow save money when visiting firemen needed to be put up for the night. I want to see the figures on which such decisions were based before deciding that they were sensible financial decisions. That example demonstrates the level of management in the regional hospital authority.

When the continuing underfunding of Crewe became clear, it was obvious that the regional health authority had decided that one way to solve the difficulty would be by amalgamating the Crewe district, which was underfunded, with the Macclesfield district, which in theory was overfunded—if that is possible. It therefore began to moot the question of a reorganisation. It was not merely a reorganisation. When the authority advertised the jobs concerned, there was such a poor response that the young lady drawing up the short list suddenly decided, after the closing date, to put her name on the list. She was appointed to the job—I am sure that it was on the basis of her brilliance.

In case there are any doubts about the reasons for mooting the reorganisation, a consultation document—a laughable title—was produced entitled, "A new district health authority for the people of Crewe and Macclesfield." That gave the game away. It said:

"Crewe District Health Authority is presently £8·1 million short of its full weighted capitation position"—

that refers to the new form of calculation that the Department intends to use—

"and is moving towards its target as resources are allocated each year. Macclesfield District Health Authority is £5·4 million above its weighted capitation and must therefore lose this amount over future years."

In other words, the region's answer is not to examine the needs of Crewe district health authority but to say, "If we jam these two awkward health authorities together, we can somehow balance the books at the end of three or four years, because no one will notice that what we are doing is taking money from Macclesfield and losing it in Crewe."

Not surprisingly, that news did not delight the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) or me. One might have thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that combination of hon. Members would be designed to make even the present Health Minister think twice, but apparently we are having no effect whatever. So impressed are Ministers with the quality of management of Sir Donald Wilson that, when the east midlands got into real problems, they did not look outside or advertise from some brilliant brain to come in, but went instead to the Mersey region and asked Sir Donald Wilson to take over. That was astonishing to those of us in the Crewe area, who had already seen the effects of decisions that were being

taken by Sir Donald and his cronies in our area and who had considerable reservations about the quality of those decisions.

We have been told in a short space of time not only that Crewe must find £700,000, because it is £2 million overspent, and lose a number of jobs, some of them by compulsory redundancy—the figure given in the original assessment was 50—but that the £700,000 is just the first step to reducing the gap of £2 million that has been identified.

Then, surprise surprise, this chief executive gentleman who has been so lauded and who is apparently so active in the defence of the extraordinary finances of the department, resigns at very short notice—because, we are told, he has been headhunted. The joke on the wards goes: "They've had the head. When will they come and collect the rest of the body?" We have considerable doubts about whether that gentleman's expertise is what has recommended him to the region. One might have thought that, even under the present Government, anyone who gets more than £2 million overspent on two years would find himself in some considerable difficulty.

Crewe has always faced problems of underfunding. It needed considerable injections of money for staff, and faces a £4 million bill for building work. The roof of the hospital built by a gentleman called Poulson is now collapsing, even though the building has not been there for very long. I am no great architect, but I suspect that, in a hospital, a roof is quite useful. I do not know how many things can be done without, but doing without a roof could be mildly embarrassing.

Crewe will now have to find the money not only from health care but from jobs. These days, people in hospitals do not carry normal titles; for example, we have people responsible for "hotel services"—a laughable title. I suppose that hospitals may bear some resemblance to British hotels, but that simply tells us something about the problems of the tourist industry. Such was the level of expertise within the trust that, at the very moment when the person responsible for hotel services was being told that the job no longer existed, management were seeking to appoint someone from the commercial sector to run the laundry and other so-called services. That is extraordinary and cannot in any way be defended.

The Minister may say that I am not giving an accurate picture. His own Department engaged Price Waterhouse to do a survey of the hospital recently and, in the past three months, Price Waterhouse has reported—for some reason, the Government seem to be keeping quiet about it—that the hospital is not only efficient but very efficient. It is not the staff who are the problem—nor is it the delivery of health care, even in the extraordinarily difficult conditions under which staff are operating, with wards closed at weekends and people being moved around. Quality of care is not the problem.

I should have thought that the Minister would now think to himself, "Price Waterhouse says that the place is efficient; there is an overspend of £2 million for the second year running; the money can no longer be taken out of the reserves, so the business of sacking staff has to be considered" and ask himself—or better still, the Secretary of State should ask herself—"What is really wrong? Is it the fact that we do not allow enough money to the district hospital to provide the services that we demand of it?"

The Secretary of State has frequently told me, in letters and in the House, that I should be proud of the hospital, because it is treating more people. I have no doubt that the Minister has the figures today and will be saying, "Look how clever we are. More people are being treated." But if Leighton hospital is overtrading and if the Secretary of State demands that that level of care is kept up—and she has given the instructions that it should not only continue to give that level of care but increase the rate at which it is treating patients—how does the Minister explain the gap between the resources needed for the jobs and the amount of money that is available for the trust?

Perhaps the Minister will say that that is a matter for the trust itself. He must know that the staff are now at risk and that morale at the hospital is dangerously and unacceptably low—and I have lived in hospitals for much of my life. People are deeply worried about the future of their jobs. It is important to understand that the lessons of Crewe trust and its problems have not been lost on the surrounding areas. Halton trust, which became a trust yesterday, learned its first lesson from Crewe, closing one of its best and most well-equipped wards on the very first day. Crewe is offering an example to people in the north-west region of how not to run a hospital.

There is also the problem of community care. So far, no one has worked out that, whereas hospital treatment is free at the point of use, once the social services act as a filter between elderly and mentally handicapped people and the services they require, a larger part of the cost will inevitably be paid by the patients themselves. That has not been sufficiently highlighted in the run-up to community care.

I have a number of questions to ask the Minister, but I must tell him that the recitation of a series of very spurious statistics will not be a sufficient response to my points of concern. Does the Minister accept that there are such severe problems in the Mid Cheshire hospital trust that it requires an independent investigation into the financial management, into staff and patient care and, above all, into the amount of money available to the trust from the regional hospital authority?

Will the Minister also instigate an urgent inquiry into what is happening at regional level? How does he justify the decisions being taken, such as the purchase of flats, at a time when health authorities are being told to cut the level of services they provide?

How on earth can the Minister justify the arbitrary and outrageous decision to force the two health authorities —Crewe and Macclesfield—to combine in order to save money? After all, that is what it is all about. There is no suggestion that there will be a better level of health care; there is simply the suggestion in the so-called consultation document that it is a way to make the two budgets balance.

The experiment has failed—the creation of trusts has not provided better care and the money has not followed the patient. All it means is that the Government are increasingly able to run down our hospitals on the very weak pretext that somehow or other the decision is being made by local people, who, the Government say, are now able to decide their own health care priorities.

That is a manifest farce. Local people have no say in what happens in their hospitals; they have no say in what happens with staffing levels; they have no say in what wards are closed; they have no say in the decision on which people are moved around on weekends; they have no say in who should be sacked—they have absolutely no say in what happens either in the regional hospital authority or in their local hospital trust.

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

What is more, the clear evidence of financial problems is never discussed in public. Indeed, even when I ask questions in this House, the Secretary of State simply says, "There has been a meeting between all the relevant authorities, it has all been sorted out, don't worry about it." I not only worry about it: I have a deep feeling of unease about the management in my hospitals and certainly in my region. Moving someone who is incompetent from one region to another simply because his predecessor was even more incompetent is a pretty poor decision.

If the Minister is not prepared to agree to an independent assessment, we will know that the Government are not serious about setting up trusts or the delivery of health care. If they want to privatise the health service through incompetence, they are doing well; but if they want to provide health care, the Miniser had better answer my questions today—otherwise we will know that elected Members of Parliament cannot even get answers on behalf of patients.

10.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) began by speaking about free speech. There is no danger that she will not continue to exercise that right very effectively. Nor is there any danger that we will not continue to answer her. She touched on ministerial accountability in the health service. I must tell her that I was in my place in the early minutes of April fool's day to discuss neurosciences in Liverpool. I was back in my place in the early hours of this morning—3.30 am—to debate the London ambulance service; I am here again now, self-evidently, to discuss a particular local hospital with the hon. Lady. I shall continue to be in my place to discuss mental health with my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring). Junior doctors have their little complaint about how long they work; junior Ministers occasionally find themselves in the same position, so we empathise.

The hon. Lady raised so many different points that I do not think that I can cover all of them. However, I start with her request for an independent inquiry into the finances of the trust and the local health authority. There is likely to be a deficit of about £500,000 at the end of the year, which is just over 1 per cent. of income. It is possible that that has been caused by the recruitment of additional consultants, without the total co-operation of the purchasers.

That is not an insurmountable problem. Several trusts have overspent, but the vast majority have balanced their books. It is certainly not something which I consider to be a proper matter for independent inquiry. The position is clear and it is being dealt with, so I see no reason to accede to the hon. Lady's request.

There are a great many good things about the trust. In-patient activity rose by 6 per cent. during the year, which is excellent news. It mirrors the experience of many other trusts.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister accept the figure of £2 million that was given by the executives of the hospital?

Mr. Sackville: I am advised that, when the figures for 1992-93 are available, it is expected that the trust will show an operating loss of about £500,000.

Mrs. Dunwoody: No.

Mr. Sackville: That is the advice that I have been given and I have no reason to doubt it.

The hon. Lady made a number of specific points, but, in particular, she raised the question of a flat that has been purchased by the regional health authority. It decided to use endowment funds to purchase the flat so that it could save money on the very high hotel bills for people who visit the region. If there is any question of impropriety, I have no doubt that the district auditor will have something to say. The matter has been raised with me on more than one occasion and I have raised it with the region. I am satisfied that it took that decision in good faith. The hon. Lady is being a little mischievous in implying that there is something wrong or strange about it.

The hon. Lady said a great deal about trusts in general. It is becoming increasingly clear that trusts are providing the proper model for the delivery of health care. The hon. Lady should realise that a hospital running itself, with its own board of local people—who, together with management, take decisions that they believe to be in the best interests of patients—is the right way to proceed. Much better that than that the hospital should find itself an adjunct to a distant bureaucracy.

The experience of trusts to date has been most encouraging. The hon. Lady should not tarnish the name of trusts on the basis of a minor financial imbalance at her local trust hospital. We are receiving the message here and from abroad that people in other parts of Europe are examining the system that we are creating with the purchaser-provider split by giving hospitals trust status and, in turn, giving health authorities the funds with which to commission health care for the populations for which they are responsible.

People from other European countries are saying, "This is the model that we would like to set up." I have heard that said by officials from Spain and Germany. I am confident that others will be looking to us for the model for how to deliver internal market health care. Whether Hillary will grace us with a visit is something which is still in doubt, but I have no doubt that we shall be watched carefully by the rest of the world. As I have said, much of what the hon. Lady said about trusts was entirely unwarranted.

The hon. Lady talked about Sir Don Wilson, the regional chairman. He has done a remarkable job. The hon. Lady may disagree with some of the decisions that he has taken, but, with firm leadership, he has made a great many advances in the Mersey region that are the envy of other parts of the country. The fact that he has been asked to examine the problems of the west midlands is a further tribute to his skills. I do not know what evidence the hon. Lady can produce to cast aspersions on Sir Don Wilson's management skills.

I understand that the hon. Lady is much exercised about the proposed merger of the Crewe and Macclesfield authorities. She has described it as the merger of two awkward health authorities. I do not know whether that is a comment on the two Members concerned, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) would be disappointed if he knew that he had

been referred to in those terms. The two hon. Members, the hon. Lady and my hon. Friend, are both acknowledged experts in health care. If the merger takes place, I think that they will find it a stimulating partnership—a marriage made in heaven. I have no doubt that the people in both areas will find it greatly to their benefit.

The hon. Lady knows that there are advantages in some mergers of health authorities. The idea of 192 different authorities purchasing health care, as we have had in the past, may not be the best model. It may be much better that there should be larger configurations of perhaps 500,000 or more residents, so that there is more clout when it comes to exercising the purchasing function and dealing with providers.

Health authorities, as a result of mergers, will be able to make more sensible decisions over the gamut of the local population. It will probably be of great benefit to the local population to have a larger purchaser that can make the appropriate decisions and have much more flexibility in the purchasing of health care. I think that that will turn out to be true. The hon. Lady will find from the health authorities that have already merged that some of them have found an optimum size.

Purchasing is a new skill within the health service. Many of those who work for local health authorities are only now beginning to discover that they are no longer running hospitals. They are commissioners of health care, not hospital managers. It is a skill in itself. The contracting arrangements between health authorities, trusts and providers will be an important part of the system in future.

The hon. Lady mentioned other matters, including community care. Yesterday saw the first day of the new system. It poses a considerable challenge, and it will demand a great deal of give and take on all sides, between hospitals, the NHS and local authorities, to ensure that it works, that patients are assessed quickly and efficiently, that beds are not blocked as a result of failure to assess and that the right provision is made for people coming out of hospital or for others in the community. A great spirit of co-operation will be required. I take the opportunity further to emphasise that point.

There is no reason why community care should not work. We know that we need assessment in each area, and in this instance it will be carried out by the social services, of all those requiring care in the community, whether post-hospital or otherwise.

The hon. Lady mentioned morale. She is making a great deal of what are minor financial problems locally and painting the blackest possible picture. There is no point in doing that. She is helping only to exacerbate the problems of morale among staff locally. I do not see that that is doing any favours to her local health service.

The hon. Lady mentioned the departure of the chief executive. I cannot comment on that or on his decision to go. I can say only that his replacement is being sought. The hon. Lady should not seek to find conspiracy theories or any other excuses to write headlines on the chief executive's departure.

I am sure that the hon. Lady will agree with me that the hospital trust has already achieved much of which it can be proud. I have said that a record number of people have been treated during its first year. Out-patient attendance has increased by 2,000 and 70,000 accident and emergency cases were dealt with. The number of patients seen was 9 per cent. above the level that the trust was contracted to provide. That is one of the reasons why many trusts this year have run into temporary financial problems. They are the victims of their own success.

The numbers of patients treated during the year has been much greater than that budgeted for, mainly on the elective side. This has meant disruptions, which is unfortunate. Sometimes, there have been temporary ward closures. On the other hand, in many instances patients have been treated earlier than they would have been. I accept that any disruption is unsatisfactory, and guidance has been sent to the health service to ensure that the contracts work more flexibly over the year. Those in the health service will be advised to monitor contracts more carefully to ensure that what happened this year does not happen again.

The hon. Lady is trying to tell the House that everything is going wrong in the local health service. She is saying that it is underfunded. It is true that her local health authority is below capitation. There is the same problem in Bolton, and that has been the position for years. There is an intention in Bolton, as in Crewe, to bring the districts that are below target up to target. As the hon. Lady well knows, if the merger with Macclesfield goes ahead, that will lead to a change in the funding arrangements in her authority, to the benefit of her constituents.

It has been useful to have the debate. I think that the hon. Lady misrepresents the situation. There is much of which to be proud. Those who work in her local hospital have done a wonderful job and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so.

Behaviourally Disturbed People

10.59 am

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak this morning. I am also most grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for being here today to reply to the debate.

Last summer, I was contacted by very distressed parents in my constituency. What was revealed to me then and continues today is an example of human tragedy and suffering which moved me considerably. It would be helpful if I summarised my constituent's difficulties. As a teenager she became pregnant and had an abortion, after which she exhibited previously non-existent behavioural difficulties. In the United States the phenomenon has been identified and described as post-abortion shock syndrome. That may have been the cause of what followed. Seven years on, her parents contacted me. They were desperate. Their daughter had been a patient in the psychiatric ward of West Suffolk hospital in Bury St. Edmunds—a ward which gives the highest standards of psychiatric care and to which I pay unqualified tribute this morning.

In the opinion of the senior psychiatrist at the hospital, and, indeed, of outside independent psychiatric assessors, my constituent did not essentially have a psychiatric disorder. Furthermore, there had been violence directed against ward staff, which caused them concern and consternation. Psychiatric opinion indicated that her condition was behavioural rather than psychiatric. As she was diagnosed as suffering from an untreatable personality disorder rather than a treatable illness, it was not possible to detain her under section 3 of the Mental Health Act 1984.

My constituent was transferred to the region's medium secure unit for those with mental illness, the Norvic clinic in Norwich, which I have visited. Under the stricter regime there, she exhibited more restrained behavioural patterns. However, on discharge to a hostel, symptoms of chronic disorder reappeared and she returned to live with her parents. At home her actions including crying and wailing and banging her head incessantly against a wall. Where could she go? The psychiatric ward declined to take her because her condition was not considered pyschiatrically treatable. The district health authority was unable to help either for that reason, although it was very willing to do so.

I was advised that the criminal justice route should be explored. A previous move had simply resulted in my constituent being sent home with a fine. At this point, I should perhaps stop to say that all the routes that I explored on my constituent's behalf last summer seemed closed. My constituent has now had a baby. I am grateful to Suffolk social services for the concern that they have shown in helping her during this difficult time.

The nub of the issue is clearly this: where does someone who is not psychiatrically assessible go? Clearly, for the layman like myself and other hon. Members, there is no tangible difference between someone who appears to be psychiatrically or behaviourally disturbed and someone who is. The manifestations appear similar. Tragically, such an individual may commit an act of violence against another person, so there is clearly a public safety aspect.

My great fear is that our prisons contain people who have similar problems, when prison is clearly as inappropriate response to this tragic human disorder. I have taken the advice of several forensic psychiatrists and I have to tell the House that my constituent is not alone in her ghastly dilemma. There are many in our country for whom there is no clear provision, because they fall outside certain definitions of mental disorder.

There is, of course, rising concern and awareness about mental illness. Indeed, that was highlighted as a key objective in "The Health of the Nation". Moreover, one of its strategic elements is the development of comprehensive local services, with local purchasing and planning arrangements which ensure continuity of health and personal care. A start has been made in Suffolk.

I have alluded to the Norvic clinic in Norwich, which is the only provider of medium secure beds in the East Anglian region. Districts do not, for example, have psychiatric teams whose specific responsibility is to provide more local services for mentally disordered patients. Indeed, at the core of the Reedport's recommendations is the view that district health authorities should be responsible for purchasing a more comprehensive spectrum of psychiatric provision for mentally disordered offenders. Clearly without the support of her parents and family, my constituent might well now be in prison herself.

The thrust of what the Reed committee reported was that mentally disordered offenders who need care and treatment should receive it from the health and social services rather than the criminal justice system. That theme and focus is not new. In 1975 the Butler report noted:

> "In the face of the widely acknowledged and urgent need, we have been disturbed to learn that little progress has as yet been made in establishing needs, or even in providing temporary arrangements".

Indeed, the thread in the Reed report of last year of a multi-agency review had been taken up by the Aarvold committee in 1972. It recommended that a patient leaving a special hospital should not normally be discharged direct to his family or to casual lodgings, but, wherever practicable, should go first to a local psychiatric hospital or a hostel for an initial period of rehabilitation.

All those learned reports have grappled with the same problem and all have highlighted the inadequacy of bed spaces in medium secure provision. Reed's targets of 1,000 beds by 1995 and 1,500 beds as a final target was originally set at 2,000 as long ago as 1974. The present figure is some 635, considerably below recommended levels. In my region, that would suggest that another 20 bed spaces are required in the medium secure unit.

"The Health of the Nation" noted that mental illness accounted for 14 per cent. of certificated sickness absence; 3 to 6 per cent. of adults over 16 may suffere depressive disorders; 2 to 7 per cent. suffer anxiety states. Others, of course, suffer from schizophrenia and dementia. In 1991, there were 5,567 suicides, with a notable rise among younger men. Mental illness has a wide range of manifestations.

The figures involve substantial numbers of our fellow citizens and the number will surely rise. But I cannot stress sufficiently that clinical needs and public safety are inextricably bound together. Of course, I accept that it is difficult to make clinical distinctions about the mentally disordered. However, in cases such as that of my constituent, it has been confirmed by many conversations with psychiatrists that there appears to be a grey area which current arrangements do not satisfactorily address.

I realise that the Reed report's recommendations that the number of spaces in medium secure units be substantially increased will be expensive. I shall explore that later. Clearly, we also need to examine how care for mentally disturbed patients can be enhanced for both existing mental patients and those who might be moved from prison to hospital. My hon. Friend will know that the Reed committee recommended a substantial transfer of prisoners into appropriate hospitals. Of course, there are dangers. For all its imperfections in this context, the criminal justice system at least offers the opportunity of a trial or, indeed, redress to the offender. Being sent to a hospital cannot and should not be undertaken without taking into account the interests of public safety. It cannot be seen as an alternative to remand in custody.

Therefore, in responding to mentally disordered offenders, the actual offence has to be responded to. A co-operative approach is needed to ensure an appropriate response. When, in the instance of my constituent, the consultant psychiatrist who took her case offered to stay in touch with the police if she was arrested, it was a generous and helpful offer, but a one-off response to my intervention. What we are talking about is a much higher level of co-ordination.

I should like to dwell on the ways in which to address that problem, accepting, as Reed recommended, an increase in the number of regional secure units with bed spaces of fewer than 100, as at the Norvic in Norwich. The reason for that is that the psychiatric ward at West Suffolk hospital and other similar wards undertake treatment for mentally ill patients without physical restraint and under conditions of minimum security. Violent, aggressive or disruptive patients cannot be restrained in such an open environment. My constituent, however, was not regarded as treatable anyway. In those circumstances, therefore, all that can be done is to resort to heavy tranquillisation rather than therapy.

In 1991, the East Anglian regional health authority established a working party to investigate the problem of providing for patients with mental disorders. As a result, there is a possibility that sub-regional units could be established. From my many conversations with psychiatrists, however, I know that they would be reluctant to use them. They want a network of small, intensively staffed units in each district. The expense would be high, but current ECRs—extra contractual referrals—for mentally disordered patients are costing up to £200 per in-patient week in the private sector. The cost of processing the individual through the criminal justice system and keeping that person in prison is extremely high.

Larger institutions, such as medium secure units, have an important role to play, especially for the real offender, potential or otherwise. There still remains, however, the challenging behaviour of individuals such as my constituent. The criminal justice route is not appropriate and such individuals do not respond to psychiatric treatment either.

I have consulted a number of psychiatrists, particularly in my constituency. Individuals with behavioural difficulties require a separate unit where they can be treated with appropriate behaviour therapy. In a county such as Suffolk that would imply the provision of a unit with about 10 beds, probably located on a hospital site. Obviously, there would have to be some element of security, aided by appropriately trained staff. After behaviour therapy of perhaps six months or up to two years, individuals could then be discharged or transferred to a suitable residential place.

By definition, the focus would be narrow, but we are talking not about a large number of people, but about a sufficient number who have no place to go and whose lives are often marred by personal tragedy in consequence. Hope would be offered and the use of non-improving drugs could be avoided.

The whole issue of mental illness in its various manifestations is no longer something which is pushed under the carpet. The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" recognised that admirably. The Reed report has focused attention on the needs of those with mental difficulties. I greatly welcome both reports and the spotlight that they have thrown on the blighted lives of many thousands of our fellow citizens.

11.12 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) on securing time to debate the important topic of behaviourally disturbed people. I also congratulate him on doing so in such an eloquent and moving way.

This aspect of health and social care is truly multi-disciplinary and it is right that health and social care professionals, patients, people in the community and politicians regularly take stock to see whether the right sort of care is being delivered to mentally ill and emotionally disturbed people.

My hon. Friend has clearly explained the circumstances of his constituents, their adult daughter and their difficulty in securing help. Their case is tragic and he has asked, quite rightly, what our policy is for caring for mentally ill people and how we prevent people from falling through the net.

The Government fully recognise the burden carried by carers who look after sick relatives. I pay tribute to all their hard work and dedication in standing by so steadfastly members of their families who are mentally ill. It is not an easy task and, quite rightly, those carers look to the statutory and voluntary agencies for help. I should explain that, for some years, the Government have provided grant support to a number of voluntary organisations which, directly or indirectly, represent the interests of mentally ill people and their carers. If my hon. Friend would find it helpful, I can let him have the appropriate names and addresses so that his constituents can get in touch with them for support and advice.

As the House will know, we have a large agenda before us. About one person in 10 suffers from some form of mental illness in the course of a year and mental illness is as common as heart disease and perhaps three times as common as cancer. About seven people in 1,000 of the population will suffer from schizophrenia at some point in their lives and currently it affects an estimated quarter of a million people.

So what is our policy? Quite simply, it is to continue to encourage the development of locally based health and social services to meet the needs of people of all ages suffering from mental illness. The aim is to have a range of services that are local, comprehensive and sensible.

The components of such a service must be principally effective assessment of need; community mental health

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

teams supporting mentally ill people in their own homes; an adequate range of day care services; adequate short and long-term hospital provision; and an adequate range of health and local authority respite services.

This policy, which is to be taken forward within the general framework of responsibilities for community care can be delivered successfully only by health and local authorities working together, in collaboration with the relevant voluntary organisations and the private sector.

The NHS's responsibilities for providing continuing care have been clearly set out in the White Paper "Caring For People" and were strongly reiterated last year in letters to regional health authorities and social service departments from the deputy chief executive of the NHS management executive and the chief inspector of social services. The form that this continuing care should take and the number of places provided must be a matter for local decision. While central Government can set the scene and establish a framework for mental illness and community care policies, it is the local agencies which will need to turn those intentions into firm positive action for the benefit of patients and carers.

Of course, at the heart of all concerns are those users and carers mentioned by my hon. Friend. The first key component for community care identified in the White Paper was services that respond flexibly and sensitively to the needs of individuals and carers. The second key component was to ensure that service providers make practical support for carers a high priority. To do that, we must all listen closely to what users and carers have to say about the services they receive so that we can learn from their experiences and develop more appropriate provision of care. I believe that we are doing this and today's debate reflects that, but, to encourage the process still further, we are setting up a national users and carers group with representatives from a wide range of clients, including mentally ill people as well as the appropriate voluntary organisations.

The purpose of the group will be to give direct regular feedback to Ministers through the Department about the experience of care in the community, particularly during the early period of the new arrangements. Its remit will cover both health and social services and we will expect to hear about services provided by the independent sector as well as the statutory authorities.

The group would be able to give the centre some first-hand feedback about what is going on regionally and what the effects are for particular user groups. It could share experiences and advise us on how services can be made more responsive and how systems and management can be improved. It could also act as a focal point for advice and good practice on how service users and carers might be more effectively involved in the planning and development of community care services. It will give us at the centre a much more direct feel of how we can continue to go about achieving the central aim of community care.

None of this can be achieved without the right level of resources and the Government are firmly committed to improving services for mentally ill people. This is demonstrated by the fact that, including secure provision, about £2 billion is being spent each year on mental illness. That figure, although impressive, does not tell the whole story, because it does not show the 37 per cent. increase in real terms in gross expenditure on hospital and community health services since 1979 and an 86 per cent. increase in real terms in gross expenditure on local authority social services. Those figures demonstrate quite clearly that the Government are committed to policies for the mentall ill.

However, we recognise that the provision of services can be patchy and that is why we have taken a number of initiatives to improve the overall level of care. These include the introduction of the care programme approach in April 1991, two years in advance of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, introducing the idea of needs assessment and care management to the care of mentally ill people.

Based on the best professional practice, it is intended to cover all patients being considered for discharge from mental illness hospitals and all new patients accepted by the specialist psychiatric services. The needs of each patient, both for continuing health and social care and for accommodation, should be systematically assessed and effective systems put in place for ensuring that agreed health and, where necessary, social care services are provided to those patients who can be treated in the community. Explicit, individually tailored care programmes are drawn up and a key worker is identified to keep in close touch with the patient and to ensure that the agreed package of health and social care is being delivered.

We have also introduced the mental illness specific grant available to local authorities which has brought about significant improvements in the social care provided to people with a mental illness In 1993-94, the grant will be £34 million in support of expenditure of some £47 million by local authorities.

In addition, we have helped to raise the awareness of mental health and push forward action by the relevant agencies by including it as one of the five key areas in "The Health of the Nation" White Paper. The main objective is to reduce ill-health and death caused by mental illness and there are specific targets to reduce suicide by 15 per cent. in the national rate and 33 per cent. for the severely mentally ill by the year 2000.

We have recently issued a mental illness handbook to put flesh on the bones of the White Paper and to help health and local authorities develop local strategies for reducing mortality and morbidity caused by mental illness. Although the information in the handbook is meant to be illustrative rather than prescriptive, it represents the most detailed description we have ever set out of what we would like to see developed in the field and how. As such, it is likely to be a major resource for many years to come.

There is a particular task in "The Health of the Nation" relating to mentally disordered offenders. Health authorities are required to include a range of secure and non-secure services for this group in their strategic and purchasing plans. The development of those plans will be influenced by the work of the Department of Health/ Home Office review of services for mentally disordered offenders—the so-called Reed review to which my hon. Friend referred, whose final report we published last November.

We are still considering many recommendations made during the review, but we have already endorsed a set of principles for the future provision of services and we have greatly increased the amount of capital available centrally for medium secure services—from £3 million in 1991-92 to £17 million in 1992-93 and £22 million next year. We are also awaiting the outcome of the working groups, under

the chairmanship of Dr. John Reed, which are looking at personality disorders and high security services. That work will be completed shortly.

To help in following up the review and in maintaining the good co-operation between agencies which it has fostered, we have established a new advisory committee on mentally disordered offenders. That committee is being formed for three years and, among other things, it will advise the Department of Health and the Home Office on follow-up action to the review.

Clearly, there is always a lot more that we could do. We still need to unlock resources from the old long-stay institutions in developing services further in the community and, to help tackle this, we set up a mental health task force in 1992 to help build up a balanced range of locally based services.

Also, it is apparent that implementation of the care programme approach is patchy and people can fall through the net. There is the problem of a small minority of mentally ill people who refuse to participate voluntarily in their care programmes. The Government are very concerned about the position of patients who slip through the net of community care and this is why we are taking a fresh look at the existing legal powers and considering whether changes are needed to the mental health legislation. A team has been set up to take this forward and a report will be made in the summer.

One point that is not always appreciated is that the Mental Health Act allows a patient to be detained in the interests of his or her own health. It is not necessary to show that they represent a danger to themselves or others. We are considering further changes to the Mental Health Act code of practice that are aimed at removing any misunderstanding about the admission criteria under the Act.

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend and I congratulate him on raising the topic. It is an unfortunate fact that everyone is aware of acute services and hospital services and the problems that they are in, but fewer people are aware, or are willing to be aware, of the problems of mental health. Too many people would like to brush it under the carpet, but there is an enormous need and one which must be met. We are determined to do that.

I hope that I have been able to show what measures we are already taking to provide a high-quality service for mentally ill people and the resources that we are putting in to support this. We will continue to do all that we can to make improvements and to ensure that mental illness is given a high priority by both health and local authorities.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

11.26 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I am pleased to have this Adjournment debate on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. The treaty was signed in 1968 and we ratified it in 1970. Now, 155 member states are signatories to it. It is reviewed every five years and there is a major re-examination after 25 years.

That major re-examination is due in 1995. There are preparatory meetings going on ahead of that re-examination conference and the first one takes place on 10 to 14 May in New York this year. That is one of the reasons why I have called for a debate on this subject. We must start work for significant progress not only at the preparatory meeting but at the 1995 conference. The 1990 review conference failed because it did not reach a consensus on the final document. The main area of contention was nuclear testing. I shall say more about that later. However, we cannot afford another failure in the treaty as we approached 1995.

The use of nuclear weapons is the ultimate amorality. The examples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the mass slaughter there should never be forgotten. Nuclear proliferation greatly increases the risk of nuclear war, but it is not just those states on the verge of getting nuclear weapons but the nuclear weapon states themselves that are the cause of worry. In the late 1980s, there were about 60,000 nuclear weapons in the world.

There were some achievements, some arms agreements, which we all welcomed. We welcome the intermediate nuclear force and strategic arms reduction agreements between the then Soviet Union and the United States. However, those agreements are quite small when set against the number of nuclear weapons to which I have referred. START is not due to be completed until 1998, but the nuclear warheads covered by that agreement do not have to be destroyed—merely withdrawn or stored. There is evidence that some of them are simply being recycled.

Some of the threshold states are already over the threshold for nuclear weapons. Israel is seemingly an undeclared nuclear weapon state, but I have seen reports that it has 200 to 300 nuclear weapons. In a recent statement, President De Klerk said that South Africa had made six nuclear weapons. The odds are that South Africa has made many more than that. India, Pakistan, Brazil and Argentina have probably made nuclear weapons and we know that Iran and Iraq have been trying to make them. The threshold states have probably increased their capacity to make such weapons because of the biggest event in recent years—the disintegration of the Soviet Union. That has created a series of new nuclear weapon states and has resulted in the selling of expertise and materials to states such as Iran and Iraq.

Events in North Korea have also prompted me to seek this debate. On 11 March, North Korea announced that it was leaving the non-proliferation treaty. That is an appalling precedent and we should urge action to stop Korea doing so. It signed the NPT in 1985, but it has been treated as an outcast, put out in the cold. As a result, North Korea does not respond to diplomatic and other pressures. It was silly to stop all aid and diplomatic recognition, because it has meant that we cannot use them to apply pressure. We should consider restoration of

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

assistance or at least welcome North Korea back to the international fold. However, we should certainly not do that as a response to North Korea leaving the treaty.

North Korea has said that it does not believe the statement by the United States that it withdrew all its nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1991. There should be a detailed inspection to make sure that those weapons were withdrawn and North Korea should be invited to take part. We must exert maximum diplomatic pressure to persuade North Korea not to withdraw from the NPT. A stick and carrot approach should be used; there has been so much stick that we now need a little bit of carrot.

The non-proliferation treaty was very much a bargain between the nuclear weapons states and the non-nuclear weapon states. That was well described by Lord Plant of Highfield, when he said:

"the NPT involved a bargain under which they"—

that is, the non-nuclear weapon states—

"would forfeit their rights to acquire nuclear weapons in return for the nuclear weapon states engaging in a process of nuclear disarmament."—[*Official Report*, House of Lords, 24 March 1993; Vol. 544, c. 383.]

That was part of the bargain, but there are four other aspects.

Arms control negotiations to reduce the world's stock of arms and to end nuclear testing were expected of the nuclear weapon states. Security assurances for the protection of the non-nuclear weapon states against attack by nuclear weapons have been given. Free access to nuclear power for peaceful purposes was also expected. The non-nuclear weapon states thought that they were receiving those benefits under the terms of the non-proliferation treaty. There is a clear perception that the nuclear weapon states have reneged on those agreements, are reluctant to give up their nuclear weapons and have not done enough to disarm.

I mentioned the INF and START agreements, but there has been little control of nuclear weapons. Proliferation must be viewed in two ways. There is horizontal proliferation, the spread of weapons to new states, and vertical proliferation, which is a qualitative and quantitative increase in the possesion, manufacture or deployment by an individual state. In terms of vertical proliferation, Britain comes off badly: Trident is a blatant example. Trident has 512 targets, whereas Polaris had 64. That is an eightfold increase. It is capable of 4,000 Hiroshimas, whereas Polaris was capable of 400. That is an appalling example of proliferation.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Is it still Labour policy to continue with the Trident submarines but not to arm them?

Mr. Cohen: Labour's policy is well known. My view is that there is an overwhelming case for getting rid of Trident.

Another example of vertical proliferation in Britain is the thermal oxide reprocessing plant programme for a huge increase in the production of plutonium.

When does the United Kingdom propose to become involved in arms control and disarmament negotiations? The non-nuclear weapon states have a right to ask that, because there has been no such involvement over the 14 years of this Government. That is a scandal. Britain is a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, of which article VI is a key component. It states:

"Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

That is what Britain signed up for, and if we cannot go all the way towards eliminating nuclear weapons, we should at least enter negotiations leading towards that goal. By any standards, we are clearly in breach of article VI and it seems that the United Kingdom has reneged.

I shall now deal with nuclear testing. In the other place on 11 March, the Minister's dad, Lord Hailsham, said that he tried to achieve a test ban in 1963. I congratulate him on that excellent example that he set for his son. The last treaty meeting in 1990 foundered on the issue of nuclear testing, but a comprehensive test ban treaty could be a vital cap on the nuclear arms race.

The preamble to the NPT about a comprehensive test ban states:

"Recalling the determination expressed by the Parties to the 1963 Treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and underwater in its preamble to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time and to continue negotiations to this end."

That was the aim of the treaty.

Britain has not participated since 1980 in the negotiations referred to in this preamble. At the United Nations, Britain blocked resolutions on a partial test ban treaty as recently as 1991. That is a far cry from the Government's attitude in 1980, when the defence estimates stated:

"We believe that the proliferation of nuclear weapons would increase tensions, putting at risk international security and stability. The Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in August will be an important event in the continuing search to combine non-proliferation objectives with the widespread desire of nations to enjoy the benefits of nuclear power. Non-proliferation would also be served by a comprehensive ban on testing nuclear weapons, on which we have been negotiating with the United States and the Soviet Union."

Clearly, in 1980 the Government favoured a comprehensive test ban treaty. Since then, they have retreated from that position in a mealy-mouthed fashion, talking of a step-by-step approach. What is the first step; what is the last step; what are the steps in between?

The United States has passed new laws restricting the number of tests. They do not amount to a complete test ban, but the United States seeks such a ban after 30 September 1996 unless a foreign state conducts such tests thereafter. President Clinton is on record as supporting moves toward a ban.

The Russians have put a moratorium on testing nuclear weapons and have since extended it. France's moratorium is coming up for review. So the conditions are favourable for the British Government to support a comprehensive test ban treaty and I urge them to do so.

An excellent paper on security assurances for non-nuclear weapons powers has been produced by the International Security Information Service, ISIS. The paper states:

"Britain undertakes not to use nuclear weapons against such states except in the case of an attack on the United

Kingdom, its dependent territories, its armed forces or its allies by such a State in association or alliance with a nuclear weapons state."

This shows that Britain's position is not even as good as the former Soviet Union's:

"Our country declares that the Soviet Union will never use nuclear weapons against those States which renounce the production and acquisition of such weapons and do not have them on their territories."

The Soviet Union also added an obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Even China's position was better than our own:

"All the nuclear countries, particularly the super Powers that possess nuclear weapons in large quantities, should immediately undertake not to resort to the threat or use of nuclear weapons against the non-nuclear countries in nuclear-free zones. China is not only ready to undertake this commitment but wishes to reiterate that at no time and in no circumstances will it be the first to use nuclear weapons."

So we must improve our security assurances. We cannot give open-ended commitments—they would be dangerous—but we can still improve our assurances to the non-nuclear states.

As for free access to nuclear power for peaceful purposes, the perception of the non-nuclear states is that the nuclear states are reneging on their agreement. I have some sympathy with the non-nuclear weapon states on this point, because there is a link between civil and military use and a real fear that this use could spread. If that is the Government's position, they should be open about it and renegotiate this part of the bargain.

There is a great deal to which the Government could commit themselves. First, they should reform and strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency. That authority's current role is to monitor the use of nuclear materials, not the construction of nuclear weapons by other states. As a result, it monitors Germany and Japan for 60 per cent. of its time and Canada for another 10 per cent., the rest of it being divided between eastern and western Europe. That leaves little or no time for the third-world threshold states to which I have referred. That imbalance should be corrected.

The IAEA should have an increased budget, too. I know that the United Kingdom contributes £3·5 million already, but it is well worth giving the authority more resources to help it prevent proliferation. Its policing arm should be strengthened: comprehensive verification arrangements—satellite surveillance, open skies agreements, a seismological network to detect tests, a register of trade in arms and nuclear materials—must be put in place. The authority should have the power of effective inspection.

Hans Blix, director general of the IAEA, said on 21 September last year:

"In the past year I have received with appreciation commitments by several States to open any site and any installation to Agency visits, regardless of whether these sites and installations are covered by safeguards. In some instances the agency has made use of such commitments. For confidence building they are of high value—provided that they are fully accepted in practice."

This means allowing the IAEA's operations to extend to military as well as civil production, and the Government have been reluctant to do that.

I hope that the United Kingdom will make the sort of commitment for which Hans Blix has asked. There should be perferably one body for controlling nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the spread of ballistic missiles, not a patchwork of organisations. It should have powers to promote sanctions against states that are in breach of the rules. It should improve the safeguards for the non-nuclear weapon states and it should impose a global prohibition on nuclear testing.

We also need new agreements on fissile materials production cut-offs—at present the subject of a voluntary United Kingdom/IAEA Euratom safeguards agreement, which unfortunately allows the withdrawal of nuclear material for national security reasons. That loophole must be closed. In the 18 months to December 1987, the United Kingdom made five withdrawals on security grounds. In the 30 months to January 1990, there were 41 such withdrawals—an alarming increase.

We also need a plutonium cut-off agreement. There is no escaping the fact that the United Kingdom needs to make deep cuts and to involve itself in international negotiations for cuts in nuclear weapon numbers—but that should not be used as an excuse for procrastination.

Trident and the tactical air-to-surface missile should be cancelled if we are to achieve a good international agreement on non-proliferation. The United Kingdom seems stuck in the cold war posture still. The Secretary of State for Defence has made statements to that effect. Even Les Aspin, United States Defence Secretary, has said:

"Some leaders are undeterred by the threat of retaliation, like Saddam Hussein."

Robert McNamara, the distinguished former Defence Secretary under Kennedy and Johnson, has said:

"Others still believe that the threat to use nuclear weapons prevents conventional war . . . Accepting this argument means accepting the risk that, if deterrence fails, a nuclear exchange, which would destroy nations, may follow."

He has blown up, so speak, the argument that deterrence can still work and that it is enough to rely solely on deterrence.

Robert McNamara went on to argue for coercive action against states that do not agree with the nuclear non-proliferation arrangements. I do not agree. Iraq shows that, even if people are killed, dictators can remain in place. The Government have taken the coercive action option without considering what route they should take. The consensus route would be better and at least it should be tried.

I conclude by reading the report of Dr. Boutros Ghali, the United Nations Secretary-General, from 22 October last year. He said:

"Now that reductions are occurring, a number of questions assume greater importance".

They are relevant to our Government.

"How could envisioned cuts lead to even further reductions? When will the negotiating process be enlarged to include other nuclear-weapon States"—

Britain—

"and will the parties, having already sharply curtailed their qualitative improvement programmes, finally agree to halt nuclear testing completely? The International community can aim for no less a goal than the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Achieving this goal may take some time. Nuclear technology cannot be disinvented; and there are a host of difficult questions—including issues of stability and verification—which must be weighed carefully. It is my belief, nevertheless, that the full array of hazards posed to humanity by these weapons cannot be adequately dealt with until we have crossed the threshold of the post-nuclear-weapon age. In this context, a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing would be a significant step leading to the goal of the elimination of all nuclear weapons."

The Government should set forth down that road.

11.51 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on securing this debate and on getting extra time for it. This is an important subject, which he has spent much time and energy pursuing since becoming a Member. His work and unswerving commitment to the cause of nuclear disarmament should be put on the record.

I approach the subject from the point of view of an unrepentant unilateral disarmer. I do not plan to change my view—any more than my hon. Friend plans to change his—which I have held since I was old enough to become a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and I am now a member of its national council. I say that because principle and consistency in politics are important.

We still have the capacity to destroy the world many times over. I have been reading about the horrors of the atomic explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many of the politicians who took that decision did not comprehend what a nuclear explosion was or the horror that would be meted out to the Japanese people. The bombs that were dropped on those two cities were mere fireworks compared with what is available now. They were tiny explosions compared with the current nuclear capability.

The arms race that developed at the start of the cold war in 1947 or 1948 and the development of the hydrogen bomb and subsequently of nuclear missiles by the Soviet Union, France, China and, we now know, a number of other countries has had a devastating effect on the entire world. That was predicated on the view that the Soviet Union was attempting to invade western Europe, and the United States' view that its duty was to contain the spread of communism anywhere around the world.

The United States adopted a policy of global encirclement of the Soviet Union from the Eisenhower period onwards. The United States still spends 5 to 6 per cent. of its gross national product on arms expenditure. The Soviet Union spent a similar, if not larger, proportion on arms expenditure. As a result, the United States has the biggest ever budget deficit in its history, which has had a knock-on effect on US policies on interest rates and has been largely paid for by low commodity prices in the third world. The third world has, in effect, paid for a large amount of the US arms budget.

The effect of the arms race on the Soviet economy and people was equally devastating. The Soviet system was never capable of meeting the basic needs of its population because of its expenditure on the arms trade. That was the major contributory factor to the break up of the Soviet Union. In a sense, both sides have spent themselves to a standstill on weapons of mass destruction. Although Britain has played a lesser role, it has been a significant and important one.

Technologies that are brilliant in their conception and operation were developed for an entirely negative purpose. Britain was involved in the original nuclear decisions and, to their shame, the 1949 Labour Government took part in the development of a British independent nuclear deterrent. In 1979, another Labour Government commissioned the Chevaline project. Both decisions were taken in secret and I suspect that neither of those Cabinets was informed. God knows what other schemes are being dreamed up by other Cabinets around the world as we speak.

We must ask ourselves a few important and serious questions. I have tried briefly to explain the results of the arms race, but was it ever necessary? What on earth are these nuclear weapons for and why are the Government so obsessed with the continued holding of nuclear weapons? We had the so-called independent British nuclear deterrent of the 1950s. We then had proliferation into the Polaris system from 1963 onwards—ironically, at the same time as a test ban treaty was being signed—which was followed by the Chevaline project, cruise and now the Trident missle system.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton correctly pointed out, when completed, the four-boat Trident submarine fleet will have nuclear warheads capable of hitting 512 targets around the world at the same time. I ask the Minister, although I do not suppose that he will give a detailed answer, if any answer at all, where those weapons are targeted. Are they targeted on British investments in Russia, Prague, Germany or Hungary, or on Cuba, the United States, France, Africa or Latin America? With a four-boat Trident submarine capability located in the right place, we have the ability to hit targets on any continent in the world. What are these weapons for, and whom are they targeted against?

I return to the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton made earlier: a nuclear war is an unwinnable scenario. The Chernobyl explosion, small as it was in the litany of nuclear explosions, succeeded in devastating several hundred square miles of the Ukraine, creating a nuclear pollution cloud all over northern Europe and causing serious pollution and ultimately cancers throughout northern Europe. That was a minor explosion. Think of the consequences of any nuclear exchange. A nuclear exchange is likely to kill as many people from the side that launched it as the side that received it. With a sense of humour, the NATO generals labelled the whole thing as MAD—mutually assured destruction.

We must approach the issue from the point of view that nuclear weapons are immoral. I believe that it is unjust to hold them; it is unjust to consider their use in any way, and we should work for their total elimination. I would approach their total elimination from the standpoint of renouncing entirely the use of nuclear weapons, decommissioning the weapons we have and cancelling the Trident programme. I realise that the last would be difficult. However, by cancelling the Trident programme, we would ultimately free many skilled scientists in British industry to work on more socially useful projects. That would also redirect at least £10 billion of expenditure yet to be spent on the construction of the fleet and, ultimately, an additional £10 billion at least which would be involved in the refitting programmes of those vessels during their expected lifetimes. However, we must also consider the nuclear proliferation treaty and the worldwide proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Nigel Evans: While other countries possess nuclear weapons, surely this country would be absolutely insane to give away our nuclear defences unilaterally. Does the hon. Member accept that, as nuclear weapons have not been used since the second world war, that shows the deterrent factor of such weapons and that they have proved their worth?

Mr. Corbyn: Nuclear weapons were very nearly used in Korea. Only the intervention of President Eisenhower

stopped those weapons being used in Korea. His generals were very happy to use them. They would have been used by an allied force, including British, Australian, New Zealand and United States forces, who would have been fried alive because they would have been used against targets fairly close to Korea, as I understand it from Eisenhower's memoirs and from other books written about that period.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) asked a simple question. He asked whether it would be unwise of Britain to give up the potential use of nuclear weapons while other countries have nuclear arms. Roughly 180 independent states are members of the United Nations, 90 per cent. of which do not have nuclear weapons or access to them. They are not covered by any nuclear defence arrangements. They manage to survive quite happily and they have not been threatened, precisely because they do not have nuclear weapons.

If we are to begin disarming, we must consider why we have nuclear weapons; what they are going to be used for; whom they are going to be used against; the effect on us of possessing them; and their potential use. From that point, we must consider the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

To make a nuclear bomb and create a nuclear explosion is not particularly difficult. A country with the ability to construct a nuclear power station can also construct a nuclear bomb. Unfortunately, that is not particularly difficult if a country has that technology. A delivery system is slightly more difficult to produce. However, as we saw with the Iraqi use of Scud missiles during the Iran-Iraq war, it is possible to use fairly conventional rocketry to deliver nuclear weapons. Indeed, the Enola Gay, which dropped the initial bomb on Japan, was an ordinary, conventional bomber aircraft.

We must start from the point of view that it is too easy to make nuclear weapons. However, it is also important to try to stop their proliferation. Proliferation is possible through the use of nuclear power. It is important that we adhere to the United Nations treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton referred to the number of occasions when Governments, including the British Government, have refused access to the nuclear inspectorate. Presumably, the British Government refused access to examine British nuclear facilities because they consider them to be part of the nuclear missile programme, and they, therefore, do not want those things closely examined. I also believe that the expansion of our nuclear fleet to four Trident submarines, with the potential of 512 warheads, is a massive proliferation of nuclear weaponry and very much contrary to the spirit and letter of the non-proliferation treaty.

We know that many states now hold nuclear weapons, partly as a result of the break-up of the Soviet Union, partly because of the recent admission by South Africa that it has a nuclear capability, and because of the virtually confirmed view that Israel, India and Pakistan also have the capability to manufacture nuclear weapons even if they have not yet done so—although we await confirmation of that. North Korea has also, unfortunately, withdrawn from the non-proliferation process.

I hope that every effort will be made to get North Korea back into the non-proliferation process and that the British and United States Governments will adhere seriously to the NPT. If that does not happen, with regional instability in many places, the tactical use of battlefield nuclear weapons will be countenanced. It will then be felt that there is a defence through the wider use of nuclear weapons. I do not believe that.

I believe that the NPT holds out some hope for the world. I want to see a world that is completely free of nuclear weapons. I want to see the removal of all nuclear weapons from this country. I also want the resources transferred to create a more peaceful world in which there is less instability. If we think about it, the basic causes of instability are arguments over resources and over the sharing of wealth, water and food.

We should dedicate ourselves not to a world in which we can kill ourselves many times over, but to a world in which we can feed ourselves. That is why the attitude of the British Government towards the NPT is at best to look at it rather askance and, in respect of the Trident programme, to go completely contrary to it. I hope that the Government will put what pressure they can on the North Korean Government to return to the NPT. I also hope that the British Government accept that they are in breach of the NPT through their development of nuclear weapons.

We need a world that is free of nuclear weapons and of the threat of nuclear weapons. The brilliance and science devoted to creating such weapons and their development should be put to some more useful purpose. When Einstien had completed his work, he realised what could happen to the process that he had discovered. He was horrified and wished that he had not discovered it. However, he discovered that process, and it exists, but there is no future in a world in which we are committed only to the ability to destroy ourselves many times over.

12.6 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, of course.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for his kind consent. I am also grateful to him and to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for participating in a debate of considerable importance.

I hope that the hon. Member for Leyton will accept that the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is crucial for the maintenance of international security. The attention of the international community is, accordingly, being increasingly drawn to that requirement.

Non-proliferation is not a new objective. However, it has achieved a new prominence with the ending of the east-west confrontation. This is a useful occasion on which to set out some of the Government's thinking towards non-proliferation.

The cornerstone of our non-proliferation policy is the non-proliferation treaty, which provides the regime which is the basis for international consensus against proliferation. Under the treaty, the nuclear weapon states—ourselves, the United States, Russia, China and France—have committed themselves not to transfer nuclear weapons to other states and to work towards nuclear disarmament.

The other parties to the NPT, the non-nuclear weapons states, have undertaken not to acquire nuclear weapons

[Mr. Hogg]

and to sign safeguard agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency so that their civil nuclear programmes may be monitored by agency inspectors.

Three major challenges lie ahead. The most immediate challenge is clearly to keep North Korea in the treaty and to persuade it to meet its legal obligations under the treaty. Both the hon. Member for Leyton and the hon. Member for Islington, North addressed that point, and I will refer to it later.

The second challenge is to achieve the indefinite extension of the NPT at the 1995 extension and review conference. That point was also addressed, most particularly by the hon. Member for Leyton. The third challenge, which is no less important, is to strengthen the verification of compliance with the NPT. That is the responsibility of the IAEA.

The treaty came into force in 1970 for a period of 25 years. The 1995 conference will decide by how long and not whether it should be extended. As a co-depositary of the NPT with the United States and Russia, we are already working for an indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995. I hope that that will reassure the hon. Member for Leyton. Many states have already pledged themselves to support that goal, and we will do our utmost to ensure that there is general support for that policy objective.

With 155 states parties to it, the NPT is approaching universality of membership, but there are still 34 states, some of them nuclear threshold states, that are not party to the treaty. A further objective of the policy must therefore be to work to increase the number of states that are parties to the treaty. Good progress is being made in that respect, with, for example, the accession to the treaty of two of the remaining nuclear states, China and France.

Another aspect is verification of compliance with the treaty. The House will know that Iraq graphically demonstrated the problem. It is now clear that, despite being a party to the NPT and despite being subject to a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, Iraq made considerable progress in developing a covert military nuclear programme. We must therefore work to strengthen the safeguards regime administered by the IAEA.

The regime has recently been strengthened by a reaffirmation of the right of the IAEA to conduct special inspections of undeclared but suspect sites. It is necessary that that right is upheld in the case of North Korea. That point brings me to the case of North Korea, which has been highlighted by the hon. Members for Leyton and for Islington, North.

North Korea has been a party to the NPT since 1985. Early in 1992, it signed a safeguards agreement with the IAEA, and inspectors of the agency have conducted six inspections since then. The agency has requested access to two undeclared sites which, on good evidence, it believes to be used for nuclear purposes. The Government of North Korea have refused to grant access to those sites. As the House will know, that led to a resolution of the agency's board of governors on 25 February which called on the Government of North Korea to grant access by 25 March at the latest. The Government of North Korea have refused to do so.

At a further meeting which concluded yesterday, the board passed a resolution referring North Korea's non-compliance with its safeguards agreements to the Security Council of the United Nations, as it was obliged to do under article XII(c) of the agency's statute, and in accordance with article 19 of the safeguards agreement signed by North Korea. We voted for that resolution and we fully support it. We shall now work with fellow Security Council members and others to find a solution to the problem.

Since the non-compliance with the safeguard agreements, there has been another serious development of which the House is aware. On 12 March, the Government of North Korea informed the president of the Security Council of their intention to withdraw from the treaty. It is true that, under article 10 of the treaty, a state has the right to withdraw, but it is required to give the Security Council and others three months' notice of that intention and to state the extraordinary events relating to the subject matter of the treaty which it regards as having jeopardised its supreme interest. We do not believe that that proviso has been satisfied.

The action of the North Korean Government is, I am glad to say, unprecedented. It requires a firm but measured response by all the states concerned to uphold the non-proliferation regime. The objective of the international community is to find a way to persuade North Korea to change its mind, although not at the expense of weakening the NPT or the agency safeguards. In any event—I accept that this is small consolation—North Korea remains bound by its safeguard agreements with the agency for at least three months.

In a joint statement yesterday, 1 April, we and the other co-depositories of the treaty expressed regret and concern about the announcement by the North Korean Government. We have urged them to retract it and to comply with their safeguard obligations, which remain in force for the time being. We have expressed strong support for the efforts of the IAEA to implement its safeguard agreements with the Government of North Korea.

Before I go into the detail of the argument about testing, I intend to make a point that is not always kept in mind by hon. Members who speak about a comprehensive test ban treaty. In many substantive respects, a comprehensive test ban treaty would add little to non-proliferation policy. The NPT prohibits the acquisition and development of nuclear weaponry. By definition, one can test a weapon only if one has acquired it. In respect of non-nuclear weapon states, there would already have been a breach of the NPT if there were testing.

One can judge the strength of that proposition by considering what we know about South Africa or what we judge to be the case of Iraq. The South African Government have said that they did not carry out a test, although they developed nuclear weapons. We have no evidence to dispute the truth of that statement. In the case of Iraq, I am not aware of any evidence of testing. My point is that, in one sense, a comprehensive test ban treaty would not be a substantial and additional safeguard to the regime put in place by the NPT.

I am arguing not that such a treaty would be irrelevant, but that one should recognise that the NPT provides a more substantial barrier to proliferation than a test ban treaty could.

Mr. Cohen *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hogg: I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman is fair about this, and that he is signifying agreement. The point is that one can test only if one has a weapon or a developing weapon. Unless one is a nuclear state, one is almost certainly going to be in breach of the NPT before one is in breach of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister agree that a great deal of the fallout and pollution in the atmosphere which have developed over the past 30 years has been the result of atmospheric testing? Although there is a different problem with underground testing, there is still a pollution problem. Although I understand and fundamentally agree with the point that there is a difference between non-proliferation and testing, I believe that testing should be stopped anyway because it can encourage proliferation and because it causes pollution.

Mr. Hogg: It is obviously true that atmospheric testing is polluting and it is good that such testing has been prohibited by international agreement. I do not think that the level of pollution from western tests underground has been such as to cause substantial concern. However, that is not an aspect of the matter on which I have come to speak this morning. Before giving a considered answer to that question, I should need to consider the material a little more clearly.

There have been two previous attempts to negotiate a comprehensive test ban. The first culminated in the partial test ban treaty of 1963, which limited signatories to testing underground—that was the treaty to which the hon. Member for Leyton referred and which my right hon. and noble Friend the former Lord Chancellor had a role in negotiating.

Mr. Cohen: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's dad.

Mr. Hogg: Yes, he is colloquially referred to as my dad. I was preserving the customary civilities of this place.

The Geneva negotiations between 1977 and 1980 were the second attempt. Those earlier efforts to achieve a comprehensive test ban were conducted under the shadow of the cold war.

As we all know and welcome, the present situation is very different. The arms race has gone into reverse. The strategic arms reduction talks and agreements between the United States and Russia have resulted in a reduction of deployed strategic weapons to around one third of the 1978 total. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Leyton that the reductions have been insignificant; they are substantial.

There have also been wholesale withdrawals of tactical nuclear weapons—a process in which the United Kingdom has played a significant part. Again, I do not agree with the hon. Member for Leyton, who suggested that the United Kingdom Government had not made a significant contribution to disarmament. The facts do not support that argument. As he will know, we have made substantial reductions in our sub-strategic capacity. For example, we have ended the deployment of Lance missiles and of nuclear artillery in Europe, we have eliminated our maritime tactical nuclear capacity and we have reduced by 50 per cent. the number of free-fall nuclear bombs, which is a substantial contribution.

Also, we will keep the number of our strategic weapons under review. However, it is also important to bear in mind the fact that, notwithstanding the reductions under START, the number of nuclear weapons possessed by the United Kingdom is but a fraction of those possessed by other states. While the proportion becomes larger with the implementation of START, it is but a small proportion of the whole.

The Government's view is that we need to retain nuclear weapons, albeit in reduced numbers, and we need to ensure that they are safe. We must therefore review the case for testing against that requirement. It is also true that a comprehensive test ban treaty has remained the British Government's long-term objective. In concert with other nuclear countries, we are reflecting whether it might be possible to bring forward that long-term objective or to abbreviate the timetable in some other way.

I can make no statement to the House other than to say that there has been a change in the international climate. Our long-term objective has been to subscribe to a comprehensive test ban treaty and we must now consider whether we can move more rapidly to the attainment of that policy.

We have considered an important issue of policy and I hope that what I have been able to tell the House has gone some way to reassure Opposition Members, although I appreciate that the hon. Member for Islington, North starts from propositions which he knows that I cannot accept—as does his hon. Friend the Member for Leyton. While I may be able to reassure both of them about specific questions that they raised, I recognise that our interpretation of the need to retain nuclear weapons is quite different.

Mr. Corbyn: You will come round to it.

Mr. Hogg: I rather doubt it.

Ferry Services (Spain)

12.24 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I appreciate the chance of this debate and the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London will reply to it. I appreciate that he must be busy trying to sort out the implications of the rail strike. I should also start by declaring my interest, as I am the parliamentary adviser to the Baltic Exchange.

The subject of this debate is most serious. In a nutshell, a British company, which is out there trying to win for Britain, is having the utmost difficulty establishing a ferry service between Spain and Morocco, which I believe is contrary to the treaty of Rome.

The outcome is being watched closely by the City of London, which is the centre of world trade and especially world maritime trade. Its many institutions thrive in that central position and provide valuable invisible exports for this country. They include the Baltic Exchange and all the dry cargo broking that goes with it and the commodity traders who proliferate in London and bankers who proliferate even more. We must come up with a satisfactory response to the problem, because it is essential for London to remain the centre of world trade and for us to be seen to be dealing with the issue fairly.

I mentioned the City's invisible earnings; shipping earns about £3·4 billion for this country, the Baltic Exchange just under £1 billion, and last year Lloyd's Register apparently earned £33 million. The legal profession, which provides services for overseas clients, is believed to have earned more than £100 million and other institutions such as Lloyd's and various management and ship-owning companies must also be considered. The impact of such an issue on all those different types of companies and the confidence that it will engender in the City is tremendous.

Shipping is an international business and it is one of the few businesses in which a genuine free market and free flow of trade still exist. The quid pro quo is that the players in that free market expect fair play and a fair deal when striking bargains.

Cenargo, the British company at the centre of the issue, is one of the success stories of the 1980s. My hon. Friend may recall that it came to prominence in the early 1980s in the aftermath of the Falklands war, when the Ministry of Defence granted it the contract to take all the materials to the Falkland islands to build the new runway.

The company was founded by Mr. Michael Hendry in 1979. While P and O is the largest shipping company in Britain, Cenargo is now the largest private shipping company. It was recently described by *Fairplay* magazine as a one-man enterprise zone. It was originally a specialist roll on/roll off ferry company, and runs ferry services in, for example, the Irish sea. Over the years, it has grown into a diversified shipping group, with expertise in ferry management, broking and all aspects of shipping. Today, it runs 16 ships.

The company is run on old-fashioned principles—something which is rather rare in the 1990s. It is the type of company that insists that its superintendents maintain the engine rooms to the highest standard of cleanliness and that its officers wear uniform at meal times in port, and it regards its ships and its staff as its assets. In this rather casual era, we can rightly be proud of a company that faces the future with optimism and sound finance.

As I said, the company has great expertise in running roll on/roll off ferries. Last year it carried out a feasibility study of the prospects of running a ferry service between Spain and Morocco. There are tremendous flows of immigration between north Africa and Spain and across the Mediterranean. Here was a British company which saw the opportunity that that presented and was determined to get out there and exploit it for all that it was worth.

The existing ferry services are run by a Spanish company between Almeria in Spain and Melilla, which is a Spanish enclave—that is the important point—in Morocco. Cenargo was invited by the Moroccan Government to establish a direct ferry service between southern Spain and Nadar in Morocco, some 15 miles down the coast from Melilla. Basically—and this highlights the problem—the Moroccan Government were fed up with arriving in the Spanish enclave and being ripped off by the locals before crossing the border into Morocco.

Cenargo decided to take up that invitation to run the ferry service. It positioned its ship the Rozel and was due to start the service on 26 April this year. As I understand the position, the service is being blocked by the Spanish maritime authorities, who have instructed the local port authority and local officials not to co-operate and to prevent the service from running out of Almeria.

That is a serious matter. Under Community law, Cenargo is quite entitled to operate the service. The regulation authorising it to do so is EC regulation 4055/86, which establishes the principle of freedom of movement for maritime services between member states and third countries. Those of us who have long been frustrated over the issue of cabotage regarded that measure as long overdue. There is now a free market inside Europe, but there is one restricting factor: certain countries are still entitled to have bilateral maritime arrangements, but the relevant article—article 4—is supposed to be phased out by 1 January 1993. The Spanish Government are a party to the agreement, but are not living up to their obligations under it.

Aware of the opportunity that was arising on 1 January this year, Cenargo decided to compete, and positioned its ship the Rozel, which can take about 1,400 passengers and 300 cars, and proposes to do a round trip between Spain and Morocco every day. The service is being run with local partners. In December 1992, the Spanish authorities were formally informed of the planned service. A month later, the Spanish merchant marine replied that the service was prohibited and instructed the port authorities not to co-operate. One can only speculate what that may mean and the real reasons behind it. There is an element of politics, I think. Being one of the newer members of the Community, Spain is perhaps not yet used to the concept of European co-operation and what we have seen is perhaps something of a knee-jerking reaction to a successful entrepreneurial move by a British company. Moreover—although it may be inappropriate to say it—they may be blocking the way so that a Spanish company can come along shortly and compete.

Whatever the reason, this relatively small matter has momentous implications for the Community and poses a credibility problem for the Government to which I am sure they will rise. The Government have rightly fiercely

opposed protectionism and subsidy. They have spent years telling United Kingdom ship owners that their best hopes lie in free trade. It sometimes seems as though we are the only country which goes along with that principle. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister what the Government intend to do to secure free access to the EC market.

Cenargo's first remedy is through the Spanish courts. I understand that there is a jurisdiction problem and those who have had any experience of Spanish courts will appreciate that there are always serious delays. If the matter went to the Spanish courts, the ferry service certainly would not start in April this year and it is questionable whether it would start in April next year.

The second remedy is to go to the Commission, which Cenargo has done. The Commission appears to have accepted the complaint, but the position is a little unclear. Perhaps my hon. Friend could clarify it when he replies. Again, of course, that remedy is a lengthy process.

The third remedy is the United Kingdom itself. I am aware that the Government have not been idle in the matter and I congratulate the Department on the way in which it has responded to the issue. I am also aware that there have been diplomatic moves. I understand that the Minister in the other place has had a meeting with the Spanish authorities, but there appears to be no sign that they intend to respond to the problem. Perhaps my hon. Friend could clarify that. There is a rumour, which I do not believe, that the Department accepts the Spanish position and recognises the Spanish bilateral agreement. I hope that my hon. Friend will deny that.

The impact of the problem on a small company like Cenargo is quite serious. It believed that it could rely on the EC regulation, but instead it will suffer huge financial losses. As a British company, it is entitled to expect member states to observe European Community law, especially that arising out of the treaty of Rome, as that does.

The problem shows the inadequacy of Spanish law in such cases. My hon. Friend may remember the Factortame case, when the English courts decided that they had power under EC law to stop the Government banning Spanish fishing boats operating in our waters under the British flag. There is a certain irony in the fact that that law is available in this country, but no such remedy is currently available in Spain.

It is a serious matter which will have serious consequences for British shipping. The House needs no reminding that the Government have told the industry many times that there will be no subsidy for British shipping, but the industry and the City are entitled to expect the Government's full-blooded support in such an outrageous situation. I hope that my hon. Friend will take robust action.

12.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Steve Norris): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) for giving the House the opportunity to debate this matter. My hon. Friend's interest in shipping matters goes back a long way—indeed, to when he and I first came to the House in 1983. He assiduously represents the interests of the Baltic Exchange and he maintains his interest in shipping matters generally.

I agree that the Cenargo International affair raises some important implications not only for the company, but for the whole future of shipping services within the Community. My hon. Friend was right to point out the slight irony that Spain had the closest interest in the Factortame case and the proceedings thereafter, because Spanish vessels were seeking to fish in United Kingdom waters. The British Government tried to take a view on the desirability of that practice in the context of jobs in the British fishing fleet.

Now, we are dealing with an issue which is just as important. I assure my hon. Friend that we take the matter seriously and we will try to resolve it as quickly and as directly as we can.

My hon. Friend set out the problem that Cenargo has encountered in trying to start a new service. I shall reiterate some of the major principles so that we are clear about the ground on which the Government are proceeding. My hon. Friend is right to congratulate Cenargo on the job that it does for Britain. I say that in terms of the earnings that it brings to the United Kingdom and of the standards that it adopts in running its shipping. I commend the company for its standards of safety. As my hon. Friend rightly said, it is much to be commended in a world where safety standards are not always what we would desire. Similarly, it is to be commended for the standard of service that it offers to its customers. Would that all shipping operations in Europe were conducted to the same high standards.

My hon. Friend observed that Cenargo has developed considerable expertise with roll on/roll off ferries. It has been seeking to embark on a new service between Almeria in southern Spain and Nador in Morocco.

I will not go over the background setting out how it came to try to start the service. Suffice it to say that my hon. Friend had the sense of it when he explained that there are two small Spanish enclaves on the north African coast, both surrounded entirely by the state of Morocco. One is Ceuta, which is opposite Gibraltar, and the other is Melilla about 15 miles north of Nador, which is the Moroccan port that Cenargo is seeking to gain entry to.

My hon. Friend is aware that there was a service from Marseilles to Nador. Until recently, on a heavily subsidised basis, it was carrying some of the traffic that the Moroccan authorities wanted to see in the port. I understand also that that service has recently been suspended. It is true that the authorities in Morocco are behind the general idea of the Cenargo service and want it to come to fruition.

My hon. Friend was right to say that EC regulation 4055/86 is the key regulation. It was adopted under the last-but-one United Kingdom presidency of the Community and it liberalised the freedom to provide international shipping services within the Community. My hon. Friend asked one or two questions about the United Kingdom's approach to the regulation and I will take this opportunity to remove any doubt that there may be, either in the minds of the members of the shipping community or in the minds of members of the Spanish Government, about the way in which we view the application of regulation 4055/86.

My hon. Friend was right that the provisions in the regulation were phased in over six years leading up to 1 January 1993. There were various derogations from the directive, which essentially—this is often the case with European legislation—allowed member states to bring

[Mr. Steve Norris]

their national law into line with treaty obligations. It also allowed them to renegotiate any bilateral arrangements that were covered by the scope of the directive.

It is clear, however, that from 1 January 1993 all Community ship owners gain the right to operate freely between member states and between member states and third countries. That is precisely what Cenargo International is now attempting to do. The Government's view is that it is fully entitled so to do, to take advantage of the freedom that is conveyed to it under regulation 4055/86.

Sadly, the Spanish authorities have so far refused, as my hon. Friend said, to permit Cenargo to commence that service. They point to an agreement on maritime transport entered into in 1979 between Spain and Morocco, which governs ferry services between the two countries. However, as I have just said, regulation 4055 clearly states that previous bilateral agreements between member states and third countries should be discontinued or amended by 1 January 1993. That was precisely to ensure that the new single market rules were in place and working.

We understand that in any event—there is an irony here which will not be lost on my hon. Friend—the Moroccan authorities have waived the provision in the agreement on which the Spanish Government wish to rely. That is an interesting development. If the Moroccan Government insisted on the implementation of the previous bilateral arrangement, the Spanish Government could, presumably at least, point to that as the type of difficulty which they might have in implementing regulation 4055. But the Moroccan Government do not insist on the provisions of the 1979 bilateral agreement.

I make it clear to the House that we are drawn to the inescapable conclusion that the Spanish merchant marine ministry is in contravention of Spain's obligations under the regulation. The British Government wish to protect Cenargo's legitimate interests. The company has acted in the wholly justified belief that it was entitled to start its service from Almeria to Nador later this month. Indeed, it received a great deal of encouragement at a high level from the Moroccan Government. It also had support from the port management in Almeria.

The irony is that the authorities in Almeria recognise that the service would provide a considerable boost. That is where the previous service which operated from Marseilles to Nador is relevant. The demise of that service means that more business is available to the port of Almeria. Almeria is keen to diversify and boost its traffic levels. I understand that the relevant labour unions in Spain have also welcomed Cenargo's proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South may not have been aware of that, but my information is that that is the case.

So, having identified the opportunity provided by EC liberalisation to launch a new service, Cenargo has invested substantial sums of money in the infrastructure of the new operation, as my hon. Friend well knows. It has set up joint venture companies, acquired premises and set up an expensive computer reservations system. It has employed a considerable number of staff. I reiterate that the company is entitled to do that under the terms of the directive, and has been since 1 January.

I accept with great regret that the company will incur substantial losses if the service cannot begin on time. My hon. Friend made a point about recovery through the courts. He is a lawyer of some distinction and he will know that ultimately those losses will be recoverable through the courts, certainly on the basis of the legal framework that I have outlined. He made a comment about the speed of process in Spain. He will forgive me if I do not personally add a gloss to that. Suffice it to say that I understand the strength of the argument that he makes.

Recovery of costs through the courts could take far longer than is commercially desirable. In the meantime, Cenargo has left a substantial amount of money dead. The money cannot be used. The company has been frustrated in providing the service.

It is bad enough to look at the impact on Cenargo, but my hon. Friend has done the House a service, because he has highlighted the wider, important issue of principle. This is all about what the liberalisation of shipping services was intended to achieve. The British Government have taken the view that liberalisation is one of the most important achievements of the Community. The Council of Ministers worked hard to create an effective competitive framework within which Community shipping services could develop to the benefit of both the industry and users. A failure to permit Cenargo to start its proposed service would undermine that important policy.

I am sure that Opposition Members would join my hon. Friend and me in asking what is a single market without precisely that sort of liberalisation and without precisely such permission being available to non-national companies to provide such a service within previous national boundaries. My hon. Friend is right to say that the principle of the single market is at issue in this matter.

We are aware of the Spanish concern that Cenargo's proposed service might lead to unwelcome competition to Spanish ferry services on the route to Melilla. As my hon. Friend has said, Melilla has a population of about 8,000. It is a crowded port and it relies on delays for its own survival. Such gives Mellila the vestigial economic sustenance that it requires. If traffic disappeared in favour of a far more direct and sensible route between Almeria and Nador that would cause concern in Melilla.

Liberalisation cannot succeed, however, if member states are allowed to ignore binding Community legislation simply because of inconvenient internal domestic considerations. From time to time, we all have great inconveniences visited on us in the name of the single market. Most hon. Members and most British people see that as one of the prices that we must pay for the opportunities that are gained by membership of that single market. We cannot have a situation in which member states are simply allowed to ignore binding Community obligations.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be aware from my response that we take this matter seriously. I am sure that he will want to know what pressure we have brought to bear on the Spanish to comply with their Community commitments.

On 24 March, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to Señor Matutes, the European Commissioner for Transport to explain why the United Kingdom Government view this matter with such concern. We asked Señor Matutes to use his influence to persuade the Spanish Government to reconsider their policy. Failing a satisfactory and speedy resolution of the matter, my right

hon. Friend urged the Commissioner to institute infraction proceedings against Spain under the terms of article 169 of the treaty of Rome. We understand that the Commission has now agreed to initiate those proceedings.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the infraction process takes a great deal of time to complete. A number of steps are built into it, quite properly, at various stages to enable the parties to those proceedings to produce considered responses. I fear that we cannot look to that process to produce a quick result. A finding that Spain is in breach, however, would be of great assistance to Cenargo in the legal proceedings on which it would subsequently embark.

That is not the totality of the representations that Her Majesty's Government have made. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also written to Mr. Borrell, who is his counterpart in the Spanish Government. The letter was delivered by our ambassador in Madrid and, in conveying that letter, our ambassador left the Spanish Government in no doubt about the significance that we attach to the matter. Our letter made it clear that the United Kingdom regards it as being of the highest importance that European Community member states fulfil their obligations to liberalise shipping services, in line with regulation 4055 and it specifically urges Mr. Borrell to intervene to permit Cenargo to proceed. I cannot tell my hon. Friend of the detail of any response to that letter, but I assure him that I will do my best to acquaint him with any subsequent developments on that front.

My hon. Friend referred to the intervention of my noble Friend the Minister for Shipping, who addressed the issue with his Spanish counterpart in the margins of the recent Transport Council. He has told me that he left his Spanish counterpart in no doubt whatever about his strength of feeling on the matter and, knowing my noble Friend as we both do, I imagine that there can be little doubt in the mind of the Spanish Government.

Incidentally, quite apart from parliamentary and ministerial colleagues, my officials also take every opportunity to make representations to their opposite numbers during normal contacts over other European Community shipping business. Our embassy in Rabat has been in close touch with senior officials in the Moroccan Ministry of Fisheries and Mercantile Marine and been assured of Morocco's support for Cenargo's proposed operation.

The House will be aware that within Europe there is the Council on Trans-European Networks, which is seeking to develop a network of European through routes, and such routes may be susceptible to funding on a Europewide basis. At a meeting in Brussels, the United Kingdom Government entered a reservation on Spain's suggested additions to the combined transport network to cover rail and sea links at Spanish Mediterranean ports for onward shipment to north Africa. The essence of Her Majesty's Government's arguments on that occasion was that a Community network should obviously include facilities that are open to all European Community operators and not only to home country operators.

It is untenable that the Spanish Government should be trying to include in a European Community network plan routes that are described as part of the trans-European network, but which are to be open only to one national carrier. Her Majesty's Government have made it clear that, in relation to the proposed Thames development, they propose to press that point strongly.

My hon. Friend has done the House a favour in allowing us to air the issue today. I hope that I have reassured him that we view the present situation with as much dismay as he does. My view, and that of my colleagues in the Department, is that Cenargo is fully entitled to expect to mount its new service without obstruction. That is just the kind of operation that Community legislation is designed to facilitate. There is every reason to suppose that it would bring substantial benefits to potential customers and to all those involved in providing the service.

We are disturbed that the problem has arisen. As I said earlier, the success of the Community depends on all member states working together, to agree effective legislation in the first place, and then implement it without discrimination or qualification. There can be no unilateral decision on whether to comply with the obligation that member states have undertaken.

The Government greatly value their relationship with Spain. We believe that the two countries' good relations have brought substantial mutual benefits in the past and can lead to more in the future. But we are concerned that an issue such as the Cenargo affair could throw that relationship off course. We believe that it is highly desirable that our two countries co-operate to the full over the many difficult transport issues that the Community faces. It would be extremely regrettable if that co-operation were to be impaired because of Spain's failure to meet its obligations over Cenargo's proposals.

I am pleased that the Commission has taken the first steps to rectify the situation. But, as I said earlier, infraction proceedings will not supply the quick remedy that Cenargo and its potential customers have a right to expect. My hon. Friend can be assured that the Government will continue to take every opportunity to bring about an early resolution to the problem and that we will continue to do so until the obstacles that Cenargo has encountered are removed.

Russia

1 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): It is surprising that time has not been found in the parliamentary agenda over the past two or three weeks to discuss the momentous events that have been taking place in Russia. Unless I missed something, there has been merely one question to the Prime Minister from a Conservative Back Bencher in the past week or so. That seems strange because, according to the press, the Government have been quite active in making their views known in private to the Government of President Yeltsin and in briefing the press about them. There seems to be some conflict between what the Government said at the start of the crisis and the recent statement by the Foreign Secretary in Germany.

I will examine the origins of the crisis. It is easy for it to be portrayed as a crisis involving men grasping for power, between the Speaker of the Russian Parliament, Mr. Khasbulatov, and President Yeltsin. As is usually the case in politics, serious economic disagreements are the basis of the political rows now shaking the Russian constitution. The west has much to answer for, because of the economic advice that it gives to Russia. Harvard economists such as Jeoffrey Sachs, brilliant academics who have never run anything in their lives—not a company or even a local authority—have popped up in Russia at President Yeltsin's right hand and pontificated about how easily and rapidly the old Soviet command economy could be turned into a model of western democracy and free markets. Perhaps it would have been better if President Yeltsin had sought advice from people who had experience of running industry or a free market rather than turning to those who have broadly taken an academic approach.

None of the economies of the western capitalist societies that we consider to be successful came into being by following the classic academic approach that what one might call the neo-liberal economists have been pushing on the Russian leadership. All the present successful capitalist societies grew up behind trade barriers with degrees of Government intervention and with massive, and in some cases amazing, levels of inward investment. None of them came into being by following a textbook example. Britain built its economy behind trade barriers and the benefits that come from holding an empire. To suggest that somehow we can transform the Soviet command economy into a replica of western democracy in two or three years, or in 500 days, as one Russian economist advised ex-President Gorbachev, is nonsense.

The best record of growth in the world economy over the past 15 years has been in the People's Republic of China. In that country there have been moves towards liberalisation and, after the best part of a decade and a half, 15 per cent. of Chinese GDP could be considered to be in the free market and independent of the centralised state economy.

China has been successful because while it allowed private enterprises to grow up, it also preserved its state industries. If those industries are closed down, where will the people who are thrown out of work find the money to buy the goods that people in the emerging private enterprises are trying to sell them? The contrast between the relative success of the Chinese economic reforms and the problems in Russia is striking. If the privatisation programme is proceeded with as western academics and some western Governments urge, unemployment of 20 or 30 per cent. in Russia is likely, perhaps for the rest of the century. That will not be conducive to the green shoots of recovery emerging in Russia.

We know the debilitating effects of our small recession on our economy and unemployment; we know about people's caution and failure to spend because of fear. So the west should have given Russia and her leadership a range of advice and options, instead of which those who no longer have influence in the White House and in 10 Downing street. The people who advised Presidents Reagan and Bush and Mrs. Thatcher, and who have come close to bankrupting the British and American economies —and who have been booted out of those residences, are finding willing ears in the Kremlin, where they will doubtless successfully bankrupt the Russian economy.

Those in Russia who are paying close attention to the advice of the discredited western economists must be clearly told that those people are no longer listened to in the west: we are moving away from their lunatic free market approach. Even the British Government are moving away from it—and so are the Americans, following the defeat of President Bush and the election of President Clinton.

These are the issues around which the conflict really centres, although much of the British and western media have characterised that conflict as a simple power struggle in Russia. Boris Yeltsin is pursuing what we in the west now consider a rather discredited economic philosophy, while the Russian Parliament is taking a line that we would consider close to Keynesian. Yet the western media denounce everyone in the Russian Parliament as either Stalinists or fascists, claiming that the whole problem is due to their attempt to win power by undermining President Yeltsin.

In fact, a major economic issue is at stake and we need to tell the Russian Government that they must make up their own mind. It is not up to the west to intervene or decide the outcome of events in Russia; the Russian people themselves must resolve their crisis, which is taking place on a huge scale.

The crisis is so vast that there is not the slightest chance of Britain, western Europe or even Japan being able to come up with the amount of foreign capital investment that would be required for the west to step in and save the Russian economy. The Russians will have to do that themselves and the aid coming from the west will have but a marginal impact on their decisions.

The coverage of the crisis by the western media has done the British people a grave disservice. There were some remarkable comments in the *Financial Times* on Wednesday 17 March, when a leading editorial headed "The Choice over Russia" offered this jolly advice to the Russian people:

> "The west may have to choose between an anarchy created by totalitarians and an autocracy run by democrats. This choice has to be made in favour of those committed to reforming Russia ... Democracies must back even authoritarian rulers if the alternatives are worse."

That was the logic which led to the west supporting Franco decade after decade. How would we feel if we were on the receiving end of that sort of jolly advice? "Sorry, good people of Britain, the Government are not doing too well —a Labour Government might even be elected one day; the time has come to suspend Parliament and have a period of authoritarian rule."

We would call it dictatorship, and it is outrageous that well-off *Financial Times* editorial writers from the comfort of their Surrey mansions should pontificate in this way on the grim measures that the Russian people need to face. Those are the very sort of people who have done so well in recent years. Moreover, the popular press's depiction of events was even worse.

A remarkable amount of nonsense also appeared in much of the American press. *Time* said that Speaker Khasbulatov was very similar to Stalin because they both smoked pipes and came from the south. That is what passes for serious political analysis in *Time*, but it creates an impression and smears individuals. On Tuesday 16 March, *The International Herald Tribune*, in similar vein, said:

"Contrary to conventional wisdom, the economy has not caused the present crisis: While it is far from satisfactory"——

you can say that again, with the levels of unemployment—

"We are witnessing an attempt by the old Communist nomenklatura, or ruling class, to recapture power and the privileges that went with it, while using the parlous state of the economy as a pretext.

Led by an ambitious adventurer, Ruslan Khasbulatov, the chairman of the unrepresentative body called the Congress of People's Deputies, it is trying to gain by parliamentary manoeuvring what it failed to acquire by military power in August 1991."

That is the most damaging smear. Boris Yeltsin was not the only person who stood on the tanks and faced down the attempted coup in 1991. Khasbulatov stood there with him and Members of the Russian Parliament overwhelmingly opposed that attempted coup. It is nonsense so to depict events.

The reality is that elements in the west see rich pickings in the Russian privatisation programme. The International Monetary Fund's proposals for the Russian economy are devastating. That huge document, produced two years ago, proposes that Russia should be a supplier of cheap energy—coal, gas and oil—to the world markets, which would benefit our own economic prospects quite dramatically, and writes off Russian industry rather than trying to modernise or save it.

The truth is that however backward much of Russian industry might be, the choice is between reforming and modernising it, keeping people in work and building on the economy or, as the IMF wants, letting it collapse and creating a massive pool of unemployment. The report's impact on the peoples not only of Russia but of western Europe and others who wish to trade with it is potentially disastrous. That is the key: whether we are here simply to encourage a massive privatisation in Russia which offers a few rich pickings to western financial interests or whether we are seriously trying to assist the Russian people in their choices about how to modernise their economy and develop decent standards of living.

The reality was quite clearly revealed in the initial response to Yeltsin's conflict with the Parliament. The Parliament is reflecting popular concern about the economy. It is saying that the privatisation programme is going too far too fast. How can we object? We in the west are telling the Russians that they should privatise their entire economy in the next two or three years. Between 1979 and today, the British Government managed, at best, to shift 10 per cent. of our GDP from the public to private sector. What would have happened if they had done that in one go? The market could not have sustained it. There has been a slow—not as slow as many of us would have liked—shift in the economy, and even that has been difficult in many areas and has led to considerable complaints and objections. What we are proposing for the Russian people is something that we did not seek to do for ourselves when we had a Government quite capable of doing it.

The advice that has been given is disastrous for Russia. It has exacerbated the economic crisis that the Russian people face and reactionary elements in the west are advising President Yeltsin to be firm and to demolish the powers of the Russian Parliament and to go for rule by decree.

I gave notice yesterday of a specific question to which I should like an answer today. Precisely what was the advice of the British Government? Let us examine what appeared in the press. A very interesting article appeared in the *Financial Times* on 10 March which reported:

"In particular Mr. Kohl has passed a query from Mr. Yeltsin asking for confirmation of western political support if he is forced to introduce emergency measures in Russia."

On 12 March, Martin Walker wrote in *The Guardian*:

"In a message to the G7 leaders sent to Germany's Helmut Kohl, Boris Yeltsin has asked the west for a blank cheque, for a promise of continued political and economic support even if he has to bring back a Russian dictatorship, suspending parliament and ruling by decree."

That was followed by the kind of comments that I quoted earlier from the *Financial Times*.

I hope that the Minister will tell us what advice, formal or informal, was given by the British Government to President Yeltsin's Government and whether that reflects the more public comments from the Foreign Secretary in Germany on 29 March after Boris Yeltsin had been forced to back down by the opposition of the Russian Parliament and the Russian people. According to *The Daily Telegraph* of 30 March, the Foreign Secretary said:

"'We are interested in helping Yeltsin the reformer,' Mr. Hurd said in a clear warning to the Russian President that Britain's support was not for the man but for his policies. 'As Yeltsin contemplates the possibilities of rule by Presidential decree, he might comfort himself with the thought that the end justified the means. But that was the mistake made 70 years ago by the Communists,' Mr. Hurd said in reference to the early years of the Russian revolution."

That is the correct position, but it is a variance from what appeared in the press based on the usual off-the-record briefings. I am glad that we have had this debate so that the Government can, in more than just off-the-record briefings, state precisely what their position is.

I believe that the Russian Parliament is an embryonic democracy which is strengthening itself. When I went to Russia just before Christmas, I was impressed by the number of parliamentarians who were determined to make it a proper democratic Parliament. If we are to offer President Yeltsin any advice, it should be that if he is unhappy with some elements in the Parliament who were elected before the democratisation process had gone as far as it has today, he should call fresh elections.

I believe that there should be a new mandate in Russia before dramatic measures are taken. That should be the advice. President Yeltsin should build on the Parliament, strengthen it and allow the Russian people to judge the record of the parliamentarians and the president. Let them have the choice of the ballot box and say whether they support the privatisation programme and Yeltsin's economic policies or the more Keynesian line emerging inside the Russian Parliament.

[Mr. Ken Livingstone]

The way forward is to trust the Russian people, not for western Governments to conspire behind the scenes and call for the firm rule in Russia which would look suspiciously like the kind of policies that we saw in Chile under the Pinochet regime in respect of which the west played such a pitiful role, first in helping Pinochet to power and then in doing nothing to curtail his excesses.

We have a chance to help create a genuine and successful democracy in Russia. That can be achieved only if they build on the electoral system and renew the Parliament. It will not be achieved by setting the Parliament aside and having strong-man rule of the kind that we have seen across so much of the world to such disastrous effect in recent decades.

1.17 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am glad that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) has secured this debate. It is a useful opportunity for the House to reflect on the policies that we should adopt towards Russia and events within Russia as we now see them. However, I do not share the hon. Gentleman's surprise that neither the Government nor the Labour party have chosen Russia as a subject for prime-time debate. There are probably two reasons for that. First, in truth, events in Russia are very unpredictable and vary all the time. It is, therefore, very difficult to form a clear view of where Russia is going. Secondly—I share this thought with the hon. Gentleman—there is a limited amount that we can do either by assistance or by political pressure to influence the direction of the changes going on in Russia. I think that the hon. Gentleman would agree that those changes are essentially a matter for the Russian people and that all the decisions of substance must be taken in Russia by Russians. Although a debate would be interesting and significant, it is true that neither we nor our friends, by our policies, will make a profound difference to what will happen in Russia.

Our support for Yeltsin is support for someone whom we believe to be a reformer. We judge him to be committed to a number of important democratic and market-oriented principles. We believe that he seeks to make Russia a democratic market economy. We believe that he wants to establish an effective and accountable system of government. We believe that he wants to provide systems that safeguard human rights and civil liberties in Russia and we believe that he wants to curb inflation, to bring the budget under proper control, to implement land reform and to privatise large and small businesses. We believe that those policies are in the interests of Russia. That is why we support President Yeltsin. We also believe that those policies are in our own interests, in that if they are implemented Russia will be a very much more comfortable neighbour than it will be if contrary policies are implemented.

None the less, we watch with concern what is happening in Russia and especially in Moscow. We are reassured by the fact that President Yeltsin has not circumscribed anybody's civil liberties. We are reassured by the fact that President Yeltsin has not introduced presidential rule, as the text of his decree makes plain. He has consistently called for the Russian people to be given a chance to decide how they are to be governed.

The hon. Gentleman referred several times to the Congress in Moscow. I believe that he was unduly kind to the Congress. It is not right to equate the Congress in Moscow with a western-style parliament. The Congress is a hangover from the Communist regime established when President Gorbachev was in power and the members of the Congress were elected under that system. It is not in the least surprising that many of them retain many of the attitudes that were then the current political philosophy. The hon. Gentleman was unduly indulgent to the members of the Congress when he referred to the economic dispute between President Yeltsin and the Congress. I think that the hon. Gentleman would agree that Mr. Yeltsin's democratic credentials are more persuasive than those of his opponents in Congress. The President was popularly elected in June 1991 with 57 per cent. of the votes in a 74 per cent. turnout, a point which we should keep in mind. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the questions are for the Russians themselves to answer.

The hon. Gentleman asked what our attitude would be if President Yeltsin gathered more and more power to himself and took on the characteristics of an autocrat. The proper response must be that we support President Yeltsin because he has supported policies of economic and political reform. We should be deeply troubled by any departure from that approach. It is not possible to speculate about what we should say if he adopted policies which, at present, must be wholly hypothetical. One can honestly say that the further that Mr. Yeltsin moved away from the principles of economic and political reform, the less we would support him. One cannot go further than that because the question is wholly speculative. Our support for Yeltsin is in his capacity as a reformer and it follows that if he ceases to be a reformer our support will fall away. The extent of the withdrawal of that support depends on the nature of his policies—all else is speculation.

One must also deal with what the west can do to assist Russia and Yeltsin in the process of reform. There are two strands of thought. The first is political support for Yeltsin and the process of reform and the second is economic support.

On political support, it is important that we continue to emphasise that Russia is a welcome partner in the western community. By that, I mean that we wish to work with Russia for a co-ordination of policy and co-operation across a broad spectrum of issues. We are, therefore, seeking to establish institutional and personal links through visits and constant dialogue. It is not coincidence that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be meeting the Russian Foreign Minister tonight. I had the opportunity, as part of the European Community troika, to go to Moscow last weekend. It is a process of trying to bind Russia into genuine discussion for the co-ordination of policy.

We welcome the positive way in which the Russian Government have worked with us and others within the United Nations Security Council. We want to thicken up those bilateral and multilateral contacts so that there is genuine harmony in policy making between Russia and her erstwhile opponents.

The hon. Member for Brent, East concentrated to a great extent on economic assistance. To some extent, I share his caution. I recognise that a profound change is being asked of Russia and it might be a degree of change that it cannot make, for the reasons that he outlined. There

is, however, a weakness in his argument and I ask him to reflect on the fact that the problem is not merely that Russian industry is in the public sector and is state owned —that is not fundamental—but that it is wholly uncompetitive. The Russians are producing stuff which cannot readily be sold in western markets. That is the essential problem and Russian efforts and, to some extent, our own, must focus on that.

It is difficult to see how that problem can be tackled unless there is a fundamental change in the structure of Russian industry, which is the argument underpinning the case for privatisation and inward investment. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate the close link that must exist between the two because inward investment —bringing in new technologies, management styles and means to identify markets—will not take place if those selfsame industries are retained within the state sector by Russia. Therefore, if Russian industry is to be capable of trading in world markets, huge inward investment will be required, and that will not take place if it remains in the public sector.

On the question of aid, I state my own belief that although aid has a part to play, it is not so important as trade. What Russia requires are markets. We must recognise that and make adjustments to the policies that we have been pursuing. The United Kingdom has always been on the liberal wing of the argument—both in terms of free trade generally and in terms of enhanced market penetration.

There are also difficulties of which we must take account. The hon. Gentleman will know perfectly well the anxiety felt in this country and in France about the imports of Russian fish. Leaving aside the merits of that argument——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry, but we must move to the next debate.

Volunteer Work

1.30 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): In every free nation, in every age, there is a tendency to dwell on the failings and shortcomings of society, usually at the expense of that which is good. One has only to look at the numerous stories in our media to gain the impression that thuggishness and criminal behaviour are the norm in this country. Yet it is the very fact that such activities are relatively rare that makes them so newsworthy. Paradoxically, their rarity leads us to believe that they are commonplace. But those activities in society that really are commonplace tend to be ignored. They do not get the recognition and prominence that they deserve.

It is pleasing, then, to have the opportunity of this Adjournment debate to pay tribute to the many millions of people in Britain who selflessly give up their time freely for the benefit of others. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates that some 23 million people undertake some form of voluntary work each year. There are more than half a million organisations currently in this country whose existence depends largely on the generosity, time and good will of ordinary members of the public in providing help for a huge range of causes.

One need only look at some of the major charities in the United Kingdom to get an idea of the scope of the voluntary activity in this country today. Barnardos, for example, raises and spends more than £50 million each year on child care. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution, through the seemingly unending efforts of its fund raisers, provides, at no cost to the taxpayer, a totally comprehensive sea rescue service which is the envy of the world. Looking around at our hospitals, our schools, our citizens advice bureaux, we see millions of people giving their time for no reward save that of knowing that in some way they are improving the lives of others.

I think that it is easy to take for granted this huge welter of voluntary activities going on every day. We talk all too often of the great pillars that hold up our society, yet too seldom do we recognise the strength of the voluntary sector as one of those pillars, quietly touching most people and forming an important link between the individual and his or her fellow citizen. It is not just the big charitable organisations that do that. Look at the network of voluntary associations that tie people into their neighbourhood. Look at the parent-teacher associations, look at the meals-on-wheels, look at the scouts and the guides.

Within the constituency of every hon. and right hon. Member there are many hundreds, if not thousands, of active voluntary organisations. We should not forget that many of them have a laudably symbiotic relationship with the state, the latter providing some of the funding and encouragement to enable the former to mobilise volunteers to fulfil much-needed caring roles. These, surely, are some of the finest examples of genuine partnerships between the public and the private sector. Within my constituency one only has to cite the work of the Terrence Higgins Trust in its efforts to provide education to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS and to care for those unfortunate enough to have contracted the virus. That is an excellent example of the state and private individuals working together for a common good. The funding that the Terrence Higgins

[Sir John Wheeler]

Trust receives from the Department of Health enables those volunteers to mobilise their skills to prevent the disastrous spread of this cruel disease.

I hope that, even in these times of financial hardship, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office will urge his colleagues to continue to recognise the practical and financial benefits of investing in that form of voluntary organisation. Funding from the Department of Health and, for education in our prisons, from the Home Office, is just the sort of pump priming that is needed to unleash the reserves of voluntary effort and remove the burden of those activities from the shoulders of an already overburdened state. It would not make sense to cut what, to the Government, are relatively small amounts of money for such organisations, if the Government then have to pick up the increased bills through other governmental bodies, such as the Health Education Council or local authorities.

I said earlier that people undertake those tasks for no tangible reward, yet there is no harm in recognising occasionally those who do not actively seek any recognition for their work. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already hinted, in his Carlton club speech earlier this year, that the reform of the honours system is likely to lead to greater emphasis on rewarding those who give so much of themselves for the benefit of others. But he went further in that speech when he said:

"We need, through the honours system and other networks of recognition and encouragement to give the volunteering movement extra support".

Well, I should like today to raise an issue that would provide simple and practical encouragement to many organisations. I refer to the concept of Good Samaritanism. In essence, Good Samaritanism is a term used to describe the encouragement of indivduals to lend support to those in distress while freeing them from the discouragement brought about by the threat of potential civil action if something should go wrong.

Let me illustrate the point with an example brought to my attention by the St. John Ambulance Brigade, itself one of the two foundations of the Order of St. John of which Her Majesty the Queen is the sovereign head. The St. John Ambulance Brigade does unstinting work, both in teaching people first aid and in providing trained first aiders for public events. Indeed, many of the sporting events, fetes, and fairs that are enjoyed by millions of people throughout the country would not be possible without the wholly voluntary dedication of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Last year, the brigade gave around 4 million hours of public duty. Its recent Breath of Life campaign gave some 100,000 people, free of charge, essential resuscitation information and techniques.

There is no doubt that the activities of the St. John Ambulance Brigade should be positively encouraged; yet in November 1988 it faced litigation in the High Court which signalled a serious threat to its activities. In brief, the bridgade had been providing first aid at a motor cycle scramble in Bedfordshire. During one race, a young man fell of his motor cycle and lay prone on the track. His father urged him from the sidelines to get back on his bike and finish the race, but he did not move. Members of St. John, having been unable to persuade the organisers to stop the race, went to his aid amid the noise and cacophony of the racing motor bikes. They asked him a series of basic questions to assess his state, one of which was whether he could move his toes—a way of testing for back injury. His replies led them to believe that he could safely be moved, and they proceeded to do this. Afterwards it transpired that the boy had suffered back injuries, which he claimed had been aggravated by the action of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. The brigade was therefore sued and was forced to fight his action in the courts. The learned judge concluded that the members of the brigade had strictly followed the indications in its first aid booklet and hence the brigade could not be guilty of negligence.

In this case, despite winning in court, costs were not awarded to the brigade's insurance company, which I believe had to pay some £50,000 for its defence. The result has been, naturally, a hefty increase in the subsequent insurance premiums. But the needless cost was not the only worring aspect of the case. The learned judge made it clear that it was the strict adherence to the first aid booklet which saved the St. John ambulance men from being found guilty of negligence. The implication of this is that a first aider, in the heat of the moment, possibly in a life-or-death situation, is protected only if he or she follows the text book to the letter.

At a time when the Prime Minister is seeking to encourage the greater involvement of people in the voluntary sector there seems here to be a positive and practical measure that can be used to remove a strong discouragement to certain forms of voluntary work.

In a number of states, both in Europe and America, there exists the legal concept of Good Samaritanism. I shall quote from the law of the state of Missouri in the United States of America. Its 1979 Act, entitled

"An Act relating to the Civil liability of physicians and registered professional members rendering emergency care and assistance",

contains the following section:

"Any other person who has been trained to provide first aid in a standard recognised training program may, without compensation, render emergency care or assistance to the level for which he or she has been trained, at the scene of an emergency or accident, and shall not be liable for civil damages for acts or omissions other than damages occasioned by gross negligence or by wilful or wanton acts or omissions by such person rendering such emergency care".

I believe that this country would benefit from an adapted version of that law. I have in mind a Bill of just two clauses, the first of which might say:

"Any person who otherwise than for remuneration renders first aid or other personal care or assistance to a person injured or affected by any accident or emergency shall not incur thereby any civil liability save for gross negligence or wilful misconduct".

The second clause could state:

"A person so acting shall be entitled to the benefit of the foregoing section whether or not he or she is qualified or trained in medicine, nursing or first aid".

Such an Act, were it to be promoted, would wipe away the discouragement that currently prevails in certain parts of the voluntary sector.

I think that there is no doubt that concern for one's neighbour and knowing how to save his or her life is a part of good citizenship. Good Samaritans acting sensibly should be encouraged and should be legally protected. I urge my hon. Friend to consider seriously the possibility of introducing or supporting Good Samaritan legislation along the lines that I have described. Millions of people undertake voluntary work and none of them seeks any reward. But, similarly, none of them relishes the thought of protracted and precarious legal wranglings when he or

she has acted responsibly and in good faith. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give me some reassurance when responding to the points that I have read.

1.44 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on obtaining this debate. He has raised an important subject in the House. I also thank him for his courtesy in telling me what would be the general line of his inquiry. I hope that my reply will be the better informed as a result of the courtesy that he has shown to me.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend put at the centre of his debate the St. John Ambulance Brigade. As someone who has taken part in motor sport, I understand the vital role that it plays in being there when it is needed. Perhaps all too often we take the service for granted because it is always there. One could hardly imagine a sporting occasion in Britain at which the brigade's smartly turned out uniforms and obvious awareness of what was happening were not evident. The brigade has become part of the furniture. The fact that my right hon Friend drew attention to that particular item of furniture is important.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will not mind if I presume a moment of his time to put on the record the work that St. John Ambulance does in Fylde. Mr. Michael Wren Hilton and Mr. Steve Williams have singularly dedicated themselves to that work. I took advantage of the foreknowledge that my right hon. Friend gave me of the subject of the debate to ask Mr. Wren Hilton for his thoughts on the central issue at the heart of the problem. He shares with my right hon. Friend the anxiety of St. John members. He acknowledged the relationship between the problem and public liability insurance. I shall say a word about that in a moment.

My right hon. Friend was also right to mention the concept of Good Samaritanism. I hope that in my remarks I shall not pass by on the other side of the road by ignoring any of the points that he raised. That is the essence of volunteering. The volunteer is the person who does not pass by the problem. The volunteer is the person who says, "I see a problem. What can I do to help?"

The selfless actions of the St. John Ambulance Brigade are a clear demonstration that there is a boundless pot of innate decency among most people in our society and a willingness to give and to help. In his new year message, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister touched that chord. It is a positive chord to strike at a time when, as my right hon. Friend rightly said in his comments about thuggery and crime, we must perform an important balancing act. We must recognise that all is not wrong in our society. A great deal is right, but a great deal more could be done.

I wish to spend a few moments on the technicalities as we see them of indemnity insurance and some of the risk factors to which my right hon. Friend drew the attention of the House. I fully recognise the anxieties of the volunteers who render emergency assistance. They come forward in good faith and with the greatest care. Yet they could somehow find themselves the target of litigation. I understand and share that anxiety. But I hope that the House will understand that I am, sadly, not in a position to comment on the specific case to which my right hon. Friend drew our attention.

The subject is difficult and complicated, as my right hon. Friend said. It has many legal implications. It goes wider than health care and beyond my remit as the Minister with responsibility for the voluntary sector. I accept the responsibility as rapporteur, if I may use that term. I shall comment in a little more detail on some of the points that my right hon. Friend made, but I undertake to ensure that the other parts of government who should be listening to what he says are fully appraised of his arguments.

My right hon. Friend drew attention to the subject of insurance. The position of charities engaged in community care activities is no different from that of non-charitable bodies in regard to the risk of claims for negligence. The charity trustees or charity can protect themselves and their staff and volunteers by taking out appropriate public liability insurance. Although my right hon. Friend drew our attention to some of the problems that arise when that insurance is invoked, I checked to ensure that that type of cover was generally available. I can confirm to my right hon. Friend that cover is available for those who seek it. Trustees, when taking out such insurance, should act prudently and in the best interests of the charity. They should ensure that they do not pay more than they need to and that the cover is appropriate to the risks involved.

We need to consider the questions that arise about matters of negligence, which lay at the heart of my right hon. Friend's speech. It is important to know how the law considers that issue. In some circumstances, those who act on a voluntary basis may be liable to compensate those injured as a result of their negligence, as my right hon. Friend said. As a matter of law, however, negligence comprises three legal elements—a duty of care, a duty in respect of breach of that duty and damage caused as a result of that breach.

In the case of volunteers, the first issue that arises is: do they owe a duty of care to any person injured as a result of their actions? Although the law often imposes a duty to take care not to injure others, there is no general duty to act for the benefit of others. I have put that in precise legal terms and I am glad to say that it does not inhibit the many thousands of volunteers who do care and, as my right hon. Friend rightly drew to our attention, give so generously of their time and talents.

When a person intervenes to help an injured party it is likely that a legal obligation arises to take care not to injure him further or to prevent intervention by a better qualified person. Should a situation arise in which a volunteer is held to owe a duty of care to a person injured as a result of his actions, the next stage to be considered is that of breach of duty. The standard of care, which conduct will be measured against, is that of the reasonable man. That standard may vary according to the circumstances of the case.

In terms of treatment of a road accident victim, a passer-by, who, in the absence of expert assistance, does his personal best to help, is likely to be judged by a lower standard than a person who is acting in the capacity of himself—a qualified member of a first aid organisation, albeit on a voluntary basis. Equally, I should also emphasise that the law would not see the work of the volunteers in the same light as professionally qualified medical workers. In saying that, I stress that I imply no criticism of the excellence of the work undertaken by the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

[Mr. Michael Jack]

I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to an important distinction in the perception of this matter. A victim would also have to show that he suffered as a result of the breach of duty—for example, that the volunteer caused his condition to worsen or that that volunteer prevented, in some way, his access to proper treatment. I hope that those specific comments are helpful and will act as a guideline to those who will read the debate and wonder how they or their organisations might be affected by those obligations.

My right hon. Friend gave us an outline of what he considered to be an elegant solution to the problem. It is one upon which those who read the record of the debate will want to reflect. My right hon. Friend referred to the Missouri Act, which might offer a simple way forward —as demonstrated by my right hon. Friend when he introduced his draft clauses. As far as we see it, however, that Act relies on a distinction being drawn between what is termed "gross" negligence and what might be described as "slight" or "ordinary" negligence. English law makes no such differentiation and it is important that the appropriate duty of care is exercised. It is for the courts to decide what that duty of care is. I do not want to leave this part of the debate without offering my right hon. Friend a further way forward, other than those words of observation. As the matter lies very much in the sector of health and the care that is associated with it, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health will be pleased to see my right hon. Friend and such representatives as he thinks appropriate from St. John's to discuss further the implications of what he has drawn to the attention of the House. I hope that he will take up that offer.

Sir John Wheeler: I thank my hon. Friend for that offer, which I am sure will be pursued with much enthusiasm.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's response.

There was a great deal more in my right hon. Friend's speech on the wider issues of the voluntary sector and I shall now touch on those. In the broader context, it is perhaps worth reflecting that the Government spend £2·7 billion in the voluntary sector a year. Our focus is often on giving and not so much, as in this case, on spending. That is a substantial sum of money. It underlines the ever-growing appreciation of what the voluntary sector can contribute, in partnership with the Government, to the life of the country. One has only to look at the voluntary movement in housing to realise what a singularly important task is taken forward, by and large, by a great deal of voluntary activity. The fact that so much public money is invested in that sector underlines the importance that we attach to the voluntary contribution.

Many people ask for direct grant assistance, on which the Government spend £470 million a year in the voluntary sector. In addition, further assistance is given through taxation and my right hon. Friend will be aware that the changes announced in the recent Budget by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will further enhance that form of help. Many individual citizens find, for example, that schemes such as payroll giving and gift aid are a convenient way to make their personal statement of commitment to the voluntary sector.

I am responsible for the ministerial group for the voluntary sector. One of the issues that we have been considering, following remarks that I made at a Charities Aid Foundation annual meeting at the end of last year, is to renew the process of proofing that I asked other Departments to take into account in devising their policies. If my right hon. Friend's support for voluntary activity is to find its place in the realms of government, the Government have to continue to develop their appreciation and understanding of the effect that their policies have on the voluntary sector. We are reissuing those proofing guidelines to ensure that, as far as possible, that dimension of our public life is taken into account when other Departments are framing policies or legislation. That continual awareness can make a great difference in ensuring that the voluntary sector finds its place in partnership with government in many vital areas.

My right hon. Friend drew the attention of the House to the Prime Minister's new year initiative. I am excited by the idea, because I think that it taps into the innate goodness, the innate wish to give and to help, in our society. I can annouce that I am actively looking for ways to pursue that objective. I have it in mind to bring into the Home Office a group of representatives, organisations and individuals from the voluntary sector to sit with me and help me to take that initiative forward. That is again a way of underlining the importance of partnership, to which I attach a great deal of importance. If we are not, in simple terms, to reinvent the wheel, and instead to amplify what is there and derive great benefit for society out of that, the voluntary sector must play an equal part in developing the way forward. I am determined to see that work through.

As to my specific roles in terms of the criminal justice system, my right hon. Friend will be aware of the regard that the Home Office has for the work of the voluntary sector. For example, we have said that 5 per cent. of the probation services budget should be spent in the non-governmental sector in a spirit of partnership in dealing with offenders and ex-offenders in the community. That again underlines the importance of the voluntary sector in dealing with sometimes the most difficult of issues. It is sometimes easy for a good charity to persuade people to give, but it is much more difficult for that charity to show that it can work with difficult individuals. Organisations such as the Society of Voluntary Associates show what can be achieved.

Through our initiatives such as those on safer cities and on drug prevention, the voluntary sector is making an important contribution towards crime prevention. We in the Home Office do what we can to underline that by funding the superstructure of the voluntary sector. I am delighted that we are helping the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, the Community Development Foundation, the Volunteer Bureau and the Volunteer Centre. They all play their part in taking forward the move for greater volunteer——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We must move to the next topic.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

2 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): It is regrettable that the important subject of the channel tunnel rail link has to be raised exclusively by me on the day before we adjourn for Easter. We have not been afforded the opportunity of a full and comprehensive debate in Government time on a project which will have a major and lasting impact on the economy and the lives of the people of the United Kingdom, probably for a century or more. That is a great tragedy, bearing in mind the engineering achievement and technologies that have been developed to create that wonderful rail link under the channel. The United Kingdom will not only have a delayed London channel link, it will not have the best either.

The history of the matter is a sad tale of meanness, Government dogma, short-sightedness and political expediency, which culminated in the announcement of the route by the Secretary of State for Transport on 22 March. The line that he announced is not based on considerations of transport, geography or geology; nor is it based on primary engineering considerations. The route has been dictated by politics, principally to protect the interests of the Conservative party and to minimise its embarrassment rather than by any attempt to maximise the great engineering opportunities that are presented by the tunnel.

The tunnel history is in three chapters. First, the southerly route was canvassed. It was the swiftest way from Dover to London and had immense logic because such a route would have maximised the tunnel's opportunities for the United Kingdom. However, the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, laid down in tablets of stone that no public money would be available for the project. As a result, the Ministers who had to decide the matter were caught between the choice of a cheap route which would cause enormous environmental damage in Kent and south-east London or one that which would have to be shifted because of the legitimate outrage of people whose homes, lives and businesses would be blighted or destroyed in those areas.

No money was to be made available for necessary tunnelling or to ameliorate harm. Therefore, there was an internal political row in the Conservative party which dictated that the swiftest and most logical route would not prevail, but, instead, a route to the east of London would have to be sought. I recognise that there are hon. Members in all parts of the House who rightly champion the interests of their constituents in this matter.

It would be hard to reach agreement in the House on the best route, but Labour Members can legitimately charge the Government with their refusal and failure to test any of the route options at an independent public inquiry or some other form of hearing such as the one held by Lord Justice Roskill into an airport some years ago. Such an inquiry would have been able to examine the best and cheapest ways of maximising the benefit of this great project for the whole United Kingdom, taking into account the limiting factors imposed by cost and environmental concerns. That is what should have happened and should still happen; instead, we have been presented with a route dictated by political considerations.

After the Government's move to look for an easterly route to minimise the political damage, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), then Secretary of State for Transport, arrived at the Conservative party conference in October 1991 to announce what he described, with much trumpeting, as an "historic" decision on the line of route. I commend to anyone interested in the history of these matters a number of articles written at the time, particularly the one by Tony Helm in the *Sunday Times* on 13 October of that year. Others in *The Independent* by David Black, Colin Brown and Michael Harrison—on 10 October—and in *The Times* of the same date were also instructive about the real motives for seeking the easterly route.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mackinlay: In no circumstances will I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Sunday Telegraph article said that the then Secretary of State for Transport had decided on a southerly route. It said that he was prepared to resist all the pressures from within his party. He had pored over the decision for many months and was determined to see the southerly route through. British Rail's plan for a southerly route also looked cheaper and was far more advanced than those its rivals, including that of Ove Arup, which is broadly the route that we now have. The report in *The Sunday Telegraph*, which I choose to believe, went on:

"Mr. Rifkind stuck by his guns until the eve of the party conference and insisted he would not announce any decision at Blackpool but would do so as soon as Parliament returned."

Then, suddenly, on the Monday morning everything changed. Rumours circulated that the right hon. and learned Member for Pentlands had been caught in a last minute political pincer movement between the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), then Ministers with different portfolios from those they now hold.

It emerged that the Secretary of State for Transport was outnumbered in Cabinet and had to concede the easterly route, largely because of the looming general election which could not be long delayed. This version of events is substantiated by numerous articles of the time. The new decision was bad for the United Kingdom, but once it was given at least all the interested parties concerned—local authorities, residents, those promoting various channel tunnel projects—had some certainty. There was at last what was deemed to be a settlement of the issue, albeit inadequate. Some months later, keen readers of the *Telegraph* newspapers discovered that, following changes of Cabinet portfolios, the current President of the Board of Trade managed to persuade the Cabinet that the route needed to be reviewed yet again! It emerged some months ago that a major rethink was under way. It represented a betrayal by Ministers and an overturning of the former Secretary of State's decision—at enormous cost to the British people and the promoters of the channel tunnel projects.

When I challenged the Minister for Public Transport about this a little while ago he conceded that a further review of the route decided on in October 1991 was under way. He described it as a

"local route variant within the broad route corridor."

It has emerged since that it is a major departure affecting large parts of Kent and my Essex constituency. It is not in the best interests of my constituents and it further dilutes the benefit that the United Kingdom can gain from the

[Mr. Mackinlay]

channel tunnel project. As a consequence, there is now acute blight in my constituency and other parts of the south-east. For example, people in the Pepper Hill area of Northfield in Kent fear that the route will affect their houses and make them extremely difficult to sell.

My complaint is that the proposed line of route has never been tested at any independent public inquiry and never will be. That is undemocratic and it flies in the face of all our practices. If you, Madam Deputy Speaker, wished to put a small construction at the end of your garden, you would have to seek planning permission. If you wanted to construct an airport, you would have to seek planning permission. If your applications were refused, you would have the right and opportunity to test those refusals and argue your case at independent public inquiries. The Government and Union Railways, who are promoting the route, will deny local authorities, businesses, individuals and, indeed, the country the opportunity of testing the proposed route against normal planning, environmental or engineering criteria. That is an example of what Lord Hailsham referred to as parliamentary dictatorship. The Government will ignore the legitimate views of so many people and railroad—no pun intended—this route through, regardless of the impact that it will have.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? It is just a short intervention.

Mr. Mackinlay: I made it abundantly clear that I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman in any circumstances.

Mr. Evans: Why? What are you afraid of?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I think that the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) has been here long enough to know that it is entirely within the capacity of the hon. Member who has the Floor whether he gives way or not—especially in a short Adjournment debate which, it is understood, is divided between the Member raising it and the Minister replying.

Mr. Mackinlay: On 22 March, the Secretary of State tried to reassure the House that there will be a minimum period of consultation. All the evidence shows that that is a sham—a charade. He also went on to say, and I have checked *Hansard*, that the consultation will be led by Union Railways, which is promoting the project and will be judge and advocate in its own court. The environmental impact will not be considered. The route will be imposed on the south-east regardless of the objections.

On the same day, the Government published a document, "Channel Tunnel Rail Link: An Independent Review". It is so independent that it was commissioned by the Department of Transport. That is somewhat cynical. Paragraph 48 of that document makes it abundantly clear that no criteria are laid down for judging the full environmental impact of such a project, despite the fact that the British Government should have laid down such criteria to fulfil the spirit and letter of the European directives on environmental impact assessments. No one will have the opportunity to say, "The Government and Union Railways are not applying the criteria that they should." As with so many other projects, the Government have proceeded slowly in laying down the criteria necessary to fulfil the European directive on environmental impact assessments.

It is a tragedy that the Ove Arup route—the easterly route—was chosen without assessing all the options at some form of independent, quasi-judicial hearing. As I have already said, if we have to have the easterly route, it is reasonable to expect the Government to be consistent and to stand by the decision taken in 1991. They have reneged on that and it is fair to ask why they have done that.

It is clear that the profit motive has become the primary, not the secondary, consideration. When I challenged someone at Union Rail about why the route had been altered to the disadvantage of my constituents, I was told that it was because the previous route, which took the line along the Dartford marshes and crossed the river Thames in the vicinity of the Kent-Essex boundary with the former Greater London council area—a proposal which was acceptable to many people—had overlooked the development potential of the Dartford marshes. There was, therefore, a need to shift the route.

I suspect also that the latest route is intended to go a little south of the area of Blue Water Park, Northfleet so as to maximise the opportunities where there is an intention to build a massive retail park. In my view, that is not a legitimate or primary reason for shaping the line of the route and I believe that it is wholly reprehensible that such considerations should enter the equation.

The route will cross the River Thames in a tunnel in the vicinity of Stoneness point. It will pass beneath West Thurrock power station which, incidentally, ceased production this week. It will emerge at ground level in the Oliver road trading estate area and then pass beneath the approach road to the Queen Elizabeth II bridge at the Thurrock-Dartford M25 crossing. This engineering exercise is breathtaking. The line will come out of the ground, pass over the approach road to the QE2 bridge, but also go through the piers of that great engineering project. That is like passing a thread through the smallest of needles. I am told that it can be done, but it is breathtaking bearing in mind that there will have to be the highest and steepest rail gradient in Europe—1 in 40—to achieve that. That wonderful fast train will have to negotiate a massive hill on its way to London. I doubt whether that has been fully and critically examined from an engineering point of view and I suspect that it is the product of the Government and Union Rail trying to rush the project through for the political reasons to which I referred earlier.

The line will then cross open land north of Van den Berghs on a viaduct crossing London road, Purfleet at the Stonehouse lane junction. It will run parallel to the Purfleet bypass on its southern side, crossing the brow of the hill of the Purfleet bypass in a cutting. It will then pass the northern edge of the Mardyke Park estate on a viaduct. The Mardyke Park estate is a very attractive, modern private residential estate in which people have invested their savings. They are very happy in that wonderful environment, but, under these proposals, they will have to endure a viaduct overlooking their properties. There will, in addition, be appalling noise consequences. The route will move on in a westerly direction towards London and merge with the existing London to Tilbury and Southend railway.

That is the position as it affects my constituents. It is grossly unfair that they should be hit in that way, with minimum notice, when the Minister confirmed in 1991 that they would not be so affected. This is a great betrayal and I make no apology for saying that it is the fault of the Conservative Government and of Conservative Members. I should like to know what help will be provided for those who are blighted. Will we have a full debate in Government time in which this whole wretched issue can be reviewed and scrutinised by hon. Members in all parts of the House? Will the Minister tell us the timing of the hybrid Bill, which will be the last opportunity for me, for my constituents and for the local authorities to try legitimately to frustrate this crazy route? How and when will Parliament be told how the project is to be funded?

The Secretary of State said that he still hoped to attract private funds. I have no objection to that for this project or for many others, but I say on behalf of the United Kingdom that the channel tunnel rail route needs to be in place as quickly as possible and that it needs to be the best. The route now being proposed is not the best. It is time the Government decided how the route, whichever one is chosen, is to be funded. They have signally failed to do that. Clearly, there will be enormous congestion on our railway network in decades to come because of the Government's failure to realise the needs of the channel tunnel project on its way to London from where it will give continental access to the rest of the United Kingdom.

I apologise for detaining the House at some length, but I point out that this is a matter of great importance to my constituents which is causing them great distress. They and many thousands of others in Kent and Essex have been treated grossly unfairly. Above all, the whole story is one of failure by the Government to do what is fair and best for the people living in Kent and Essex, and to do what is in the best interests of the United Kingdom generally.

2.20 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): The one point on which I agree with the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) is that this is an important subject. I know that not only the hon. Gentleman but those of my hon. Friends who are affected by the route are concerned about this major project. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) in his place and I know that he has taken a deep interest in this matter.

I was rather disappointed by the hon. Gentleman's contribution. I had hoped to be able to answer some detailed questions. What we got was a rather inconclusive, third-rate, sixth-form rant about the evils of the Conservative Government, which did not take him or his constituents any further. To assist the hon. Gentleman, I will suggest the questions that he might have asked me and which might have helped his constituents. I will then give the answers to those questions. At least there will then be a constructive contribution to this important debate. I note that my hon. Friend for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is also in her place and I know that she, too, has also taken a great interest in these matters. I see that she is breathless in anticipation of my remarks.

The thrust of the hon. Gentleman's rant appeared to be the absence of a public inquiry. The hon. Gentleman should know that, throughout the process of refining the route, Union Railways discussed the options available to those planning the route with representatives of local authorities, necessarily on a confidential basis, so that it could be sure that it was aware of the authorities' plans for the future and of other relevant matters.

Formal consultation with the authorities will take place over the next six months and it is recognised that authorities will wish to comment further from today. That consultation is vital and valuable, and it will give some scope for enhancing the horizontal or vertical alignments of the route. For the Government simply to have published all the options without stating a preference would not have been progress—it would have been going backwards. The Government want to take the project forward and to put an end to the blight that is the real enemy of the public interest in these circumstances. We want to bring about the benefits that will come with construction of the railway. There has now been an opportunity for the House to look at the details of my right hon. Friend's statement of 22 March and at the documents published in support of it.

The channel tunnel rail link, threading a route through the garden of England, across the Thames, through the edge of Essex and urban east London is an extraordinarily large project in its scope and imagination. I suggest that such a scheme cannot take place without some environmental impact. It is extraordinary that, for a 67 mile long route, the impacts are surprisingly few; only 11 residential properties are required to be demolished along the whole route. It has proved possible to produce an environmentally sensitive route which—crucially—the country can afford. It is important to appreciate the painstaking process through which the consultation process had to go to produce it.

The easterly route corridor was selected by the Government in 1991 because it has less environmental impact than other options and because it could foster regeneration in the east Thames corridor. I remind the House that there was all-party support for that choice. All the work since to optimise the route has proved that the original selection of the corridor was right. The route selected was conceived by Ove Arup and had been engineered in sufficient detail to prove its feasibility and to provide a reliable basis for comparison with the other principal options. Clearly, the selected route then had to be refined by comparing all the localised route options within a broad route corridor.

We have achieved substantial cost savings without any reduction in the level of environmental protection. The environmental standards applied are those used for other major transport infrastructure projects in this country.

On the section of the route local to the hon. Member for Thurrock, my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), all of whom are affected by the proposals, the section between Gravesham and Ford presented particular challenges because it has to include a crossing of the Thames in a fairly built-up area. Contaminated land is also an issue and there are extensive designations for nature conservation. We also had to provide for station options which will enable the east Thames corridor to reap the benefits of regeneration—and I stress the words "benefits of regeneration".

The route originally defined by Ove Arup had some significant environmental disadvantages, such as a serious impact on the Aveley marshes site of special scientific interest within Thurrock. Union Railways was duty bound to find out whether those impacts could be eliminated or

[Mr. Steve Norris]

reduced by local adjustment and Ove Arup was appointed as the lead consultant. It is impossible to devise a route that is devoid of environmental impact and the adjusted route for the section is described as "acceptable" by Union Railways' environmental consultants, compared with the description of "very difficult" for the alignment originally proposed by Ove Arup.

As a result, more of the proposed route will be in Thurrock, but it is important not to base snap judgments on that fact alone and to consider the whole section from Gravesham to Ford when deciding on the preferred option. The cost saving on that section is about 15 per cent. of the cost—£70 million on £490 million—but the issue is that the route for consultation is markedly better in environmental terms.

I will deal with some of the matters affecting the constituency of the hon. Member for Thurrock. He mentioned Mardyke Park. I know the area well—the hon. Gentleman knows that we are all familiar with it. He was quoted in his local newspaper as saying that the scheme would ruin "the quality of life" for thousands of his constituents. His contribution to the debate has thus been to wipe hundreds of thousands of pounds off the values of homes on the Mardyke Park estate at one stroke. I remind him that no homes will need to be demolished in Thurrock. There will be a need for environmental mitigation measures. That has always been understood. There will also be a need to incorporate screening and whatever else may be necessary to prevent unnecessary impact on homes. It is entirely right and proper that we should consider such matters during the consultation period. I have no doubt that residents of the area will find that their concerns are met. It does the hon. Gentleman's constituents no favours whatever to turn this into a great anti-Government rant for his own party political purposes, given that it is their homes that are on the line.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): That's the trouble.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West for picking up that pearl of English usage.

The same is true of the industrial estate. The aim there will be to relocate any jobs displaced within the area. Considerable effort will be devoted to that and the rail link will also help to create substantial numbers of jobs in the east Thames corridor. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Thurrock is suggesting that there are enough jobs in Thurrock already. I have not heard him prosecute that argument before. I can tell him that my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and I would be more than happy to have those jobs; perhaps the hon. Member for Newham, North-West would, too.

The basic thesis that the hon. Member for Thurrock has advanced is that the whole exercise has been conducted without reference to public interest or concern. That is a false premise. The hon. Gentleman does his constituents no favours by pursuing that line. What I advise him to do in future is to consider in detail, in a properly studied and measured way——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Amendment to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill set out in the Lords Message of 18th March be referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Wednesday 14 April.

Commercial Whaling

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As this is the last debate before the House adjourns, may I wish you the happiest of Easters—and long may I catch your eye.

This is not the first time that I have raised in the House the subject of the suffering inflicted on animal life by that most cruel and barbarous of all living creatures—the human being. We believe ourselves to be the highest form of life on the planet and the most intelligent of all creatures. Wrong. We are not. We are simply the most powerful life form—converting intelligence into arrogance and unspeakable brutality. Human beings are capable of scaling the heights of sublime creativity and guilty of plumbing the depths of depravity. From rape and torture in Bosnia to badger baiting in Britain, there is a continuum of cruelty which, in my darker moments, makes me believe that it would have been better had human beings never evolved from our most primitive state. I can think of nothing that we have ever achieved that compensates for the cruelty and suffering that we have inflicted both on ourselves and on other living creatures.

Among the most wondrous of all living creatures must be the great whales. They evoke awe and fascination in those of us capable of such decent feeling. They have lived on earth for some 50 million years, in perfect balance with nature until the brutal intervention of those relative newcomers, human beings. There are some 80 species of whale, dolphin and porpoise. The blue whale is the largest creature ever to have lived on the planet—more massive than even the largest dinosaur. The brain of the sperm whale is the largest to be found in any creature, including man. The song of the humpback whale is intricate and evocative and capable of being transmitted hundreds of miles through the sea. The toothed whales use a form of sonar for echo location up to 95 per cent. more accurate than the most sophisticated sonar developed by humans.

Whales great and small are highly intelligent, communal, warm-blooded mammals with complex social behaviour patterns. They deserve to be studied and cherished. There are so many unanswered questions about them. How do they manage to survive at great pressure during deep sea diving? How do they communicate one with another? They have so much to teach us, yet over the centuries we have slaughtered these gentle, harmless creatures for such worthless purposes as turning them into pet food, candles and perfume.

Even to the insensitive, exploitative human being, it eventually became evident that whales were being hunted to extinction. In 1982, the International Whaling Commission banned commercial whaling, the ban coming into force in 1985-86. Since then, more than 14,000 whales have been slaughtered by certain whaling countries—either under objections to the ban or through so-called scientific whaling. Japan takes approximately 300 minke whales each year in the Antarctic. The Norwegians started their scientific whaling in 1992 and, in the period to 1994, they intend to take some 400 minke whales.

The Norwegians now intend to go further and resume commercial whaling this year, regardless of the decision made by the IWC. It is that blatant disregard for the international community on the part of the Norwegian Government which has driven me to raise the issue this afternoon. I shall return later to the subject of Norway and its supposedly socialist and environmentally concerned Prime Minister, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, but first I want to say a few words about the method of whale killing. Cruelty starts not with the firing of the harpoon, but with the chase of the animal. It causes great stress for those creatures because it can take up to an hour or more. Sometimes, the whaling ships use sonar to confuse and scare the animal so that it comes to the surface and thus presents itself as an easier target to hit with the harpoon.

In 1980, the IWC humane killing workshop agreed on a definition:

"To cause death without pain, stress or distress perceptible to the animal."

At the same IWC workshop in 1993, the pro-whaling nations said categorically that such a definition could not be achieved in whaling operations. The solution, therefore, to people like myself, the Minister and others is simple, obvious and logical. If whales cannot be killed humanely, they should not be killed at all.

Despite all that, the slaughter still goes on. Japan and Norway are probably the worst offenders, followed by Iceland, but there are others. Japan and Norway attempt to camouflage their limited commercial whaling by calling it scientific whaling. It is a perversion of the word "scientific". It is rather like Dr. Josef Mengele experimenting on live human beings in Nazi concentration camps in the name of science.

What do those countries discover in their scientific whaling? When they have slaughtered the whales, they find that there are fewer whales in the sea than when they started. What happens to the meat? Surprise, surprise—if you happen to have a preference for whale meat, Madam Deputy Speaker, which I know is anathema to you as it is to me, that meat can be purchased in good restaurants in Tokyo and in supermarkets in Oslo. So much for scientific whaling.

What sort of cruelty are we actually talking about? The weapon used to kill whales is an explosive harpoon. Its head has two or four barbs, to which is screwed an explosive grenade. As the harpoon enters the body the grenade explodes, scattering whatever organs and tissue with which it happens to make contact. For the hunting of minke whales, the species now targeted by whalers, a different explosive has been developed for use in the harpoon. It is called penthrite—a powerful explosive that damages less of the whale meat than traditional explosive harpoons. Whales are mammals with a highly developed nervous system, comparable in many ways to that of land mammals, including man. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that they are capable of feeling pain to the same extent.

I want now to return to the determination of Norway to recommence open commercial whaling later this year. In February, at the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs. Brundtland, addressed us. There were questions afterwards. I and two Conservative Members—one from the House and one from the other place—together with a German Member of Parliament asked why Norway was determined to ignore an international agreement on whaling. At that point, Mrs. Brundtland went nuclear. She gave us a long, rambling, incoherent, inaccurate and, indeed, devious reply. I have circulated copies of it to hon.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Members. In my opinion, Mrs. Brundtland, who parades her green credentials around the world to polite applause from liberal-minded audiences, is nothing short of a hypocrite.

Mrs. Brundtland accused the IWC of being unscientific in its use of evidence to protect the North sea stock of minke whales. In 1991, the scientific committee of the IWC concluded that the north-east Atlantic minkes had been continuously declining throughout Norwegian whaling between 1953 and 1983. Norwegian scientists did not contest that fact. Mrs. Brundtland then accused the IWC of breaking its own rules, but Norway's killing of minke whales with explosive harpoons actually contravenes Norway's animal welfare regulations.

Having not succeeded up to that point, Mrs. Brundtland then resorted to the most bankrupt of all arguments. It was given to her by one of her officials, almost as an afterthought, and it would have been better had she not mentioned it. She said that whales had to be controlled because they eat too many fish. The depletion of fish stocks has nothing to do with whales and seals but everything to do with overfishing by man. I have heard the Minister speak about the matter on many occasions in the House and elsewhere. The answer lies in factory-ship fishing and the mismanagement of fish stocks. Before intensive fishing methods were employed, the seas teemed with all fish species. There was no fish shortage; nor was there a whale shortage. Whales were not endangered before the activities of purblind, stupid human beings intervened. If Mrs. Brundtland does not understand that, I believe her to be a total fool.

Whales are migratory creatures. They do not belong to any one nation or to any group of nations. They belong to the planet and in that sense they belong to us all. No body and no nation has a right to kill them, especially not in defiance of international agreements. Neither Norway nor Japan has any economic justification for killing whales. After all, they are two of the wealthiest countries in the world.

I ask the Minister to say what action we should take against Norway if it goes ahead with commercial whaling. If I had my way, I would give the crews of the whalers five minutes to leave their ships and then I would blow them, the ships, out of the water. I suspect that the Minister might not wish to go so far on this occasion. I hope, however, that he will take an aggressive stand in respect of the Norwegians.

I put a question to the Prime Minister recently on whaling. It was a gentle question and I hoped that it would be given a helpful reply. I could have been my usual, aggressive person and gone for his throat. I had some good questions at the back of my mind. To myself, I said, "No, the right hon. Gentleman is a decent sort and he will no doubt say something helpful." He did not. I then regretted having asked him such a gentle question. I asked the right hon. Gentleman whether he would oppose Norway's application to join the EEC if it persisted with its decision to resume commercial whaling. He just passed over the question. Unfortunately, his reply was not as good as the responses that I have been getting from his Ministers. Worse than that, the Prime Minister's answer was reported in the Norwegian press and taken up by Norwegian politicians on the basis that the British Government did not mind very much if the Norwegians went ahead with commercial whaling. That is how the right hon. Gentleman's answer was translated in the Norwegian press. I hope that the Minister will rectify the situation this afternoon and make the British Government's position clear so that no one can misinterpret their views. On this occasion, the Government will be speaking for us all.

As I have said, I think that the Minister must be pushed into taking an aggressive stand against Norway. There should be no negotiation with Norway over its European Community application should commercial whaling recommence. Appropriate sanctions should be taken on Norwegian fish exports by all the Community nations. Norwegian ships should be banned from European Community waters. I should like to see a ban placed on all Norwegian exports, including oil and gas. The country must be made to pay if it is to defy world opinion. I am sure that animal welfare organisations will organise boycotts and demonstrations against Norway should commercial whaling recommence.

I say in a calculated way that Norwegian embassies in several European countries will undoubtedly become a focus for protest. All the public relations companies that the Norwegian Government are busily and, I understand, unsuccessfully trying to retain will not be able to repair the enormous damage to Norway's image should it defy the great weight of public opinion in Europe and north America.

The British Government should not stop there. We still have to deal with Japan, which has continued to defy world opinion and the IWC for many years now. Worldwide measures must be taken to protect the whale.

I shall ask the Minister some specific questions. If he cannot answer them this afternoon, I will ensure that they reach him in written form so he can give me a considered response. Apart from myself, many citizens of this country and of others will be interested to hear his response. I believe that the United Kingdom should support the proposal of France that there should be a sanctuary in the southern oceans, including Antarctic waters. I received a welcome letter of support from the Falklands Islands Government. It was a thoughtful response and I will send a copy of that letter to the Minister.

The United Kingdom Government must rigorously and publicly oppose moves to reopen commercial whaling under the new revised management procedures. We must oppose it on the ground of cruelty. The British Government's voice must be heard unequivocally on the matter. We must not surrender to Norwegian and Japanese demands in order to save the IWC. That would be like giving way to terrorist demands.

Norway might be pushing for a negotiated position on the revised management procedures rather than seriously contemplating quitting the IWC. We must call Norway's bluff. Voting in the IWC must remain on the basis of requiring a three quarters majority. One knows that the Japanese are trying to secure voting on a simple majority basis and, I understand, busily buying up the votes of smaller countries to achieve that. It would be contrary to the convention to allow that to happen. Again, I hope that the British Government will speak out loudly on the matter.

Norwegian and Japanese Governments are spending huge sums of money on pro-whaling propaganda and a misinformation campaign. It all started with Mrs. Brundtland herself. It is essential that non-whaling

Governments such as ours challenge the campaign and do not simply leave that challenge to the non-governmental organisations which are doing so much sterling work but lack the authority that a sovereign Government can bring to their statements.

There is enormous all-party opposition in the House to the whaling activities of Norway and Japan. The British Government must reflect that opinion in their dealings with those two wickedly misguided countries. I have spoken on the issue before in the House. I have spoken in previous Adjournment debates. I have always had a good response from the Government because they know the depth of feeling in the House and in the country.

But we seem to be getting nowhere with Norway and Japan. We must not allow them to defy civilised opinion in Britain, north America and the European Community. They must take some hard lessons. I hope that the British Government will start the process of delivering hard lessons and will protect those wonderful creatures, the whales. I hope that the British Government will tell the Norwegians and Japanese that they will not be allowed to kill the whales.

2.46 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): This is the third time that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I have discussed this matter in the House. As I listened to him, I looked at the "BBC-Vacher's Guide to the New House of Commons". For the hon. Gentleman it says:

"Interests (Political) No details.
Interests (Personal) No details."

Vacher's cannot have been listening in the past few years to the hon. Gentleman's real concerns on environmental matters.

As the hon. Gentleman said, we have never had a disagreement of any significance. That will be the case today because the British Government take the view that they take not to reflect opinion within or outside the House, but because they share that opinion. They are not merely running in front of the crowd. We believe largely what most people believe about whaling.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Norwegian claim about fish stocks. He will be interested to know that, in the talks on the enlargement of the Community and bringing in the European Free Trade Association countries, projections were made of fish stocks. The Norwegians project a sustained increase and improvement in the cod stocks in the north Atlantic. So clearly, whatever depredations may be inflicted on the fish stocks, they do not stop the stocks showing a sustained improvement. We, too, benefit from that improvement.

I begin with Norway and the link with the enlargement of the Community because that was the main thrust of the hon. Gentleman's speech. As he knows, Norway has applied for membership of the European Community. Indeed, it applied before the referendum eventually went against membership. The EC has agreed to the habitats directive. That directive comes into force in May 1994. Under the directive, all species of cetaceans will be protected in the Community's territorial waters up to 200 miles. That includes whales.

All trade in whale products throughout the Community is banned under the EC CITES—Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species—regulations. Therefore, the cumulative effect of the agreements is a whaling ban in Community waters. There is no other way of interpreting them. When Norway comes into the Community it seems to me inconceivable that the Community would wish to relax that ban. Therefore, Norway has applied to join an organisation which bans whaling. In forthcoming negotiations, public and governmental attention will be focused on Norway and I cannot imagine that a proposal to change that situation would be readily negotiable. In one sense, Norway is moving towards a situation in which its freedom of manoeuvre is largely circumscribed. That is to be welcomed.

The remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister do not in any way represent a dilution of the Government's stand. I have looked hard at what my right hon. Friend said and what has been said previously, and what I am saying has my right hon. Friend's agreement, as it does of every member of the Government. It is not the case that anyone in the Government is going soggy on this issue.

The issue of whaling unites the House and public opinion. It is timely for the hon. Gentleman to raise this matter now because the International Whaling Commission meets in Kyoto next month. Many issues are on the agenda and it is bound to cover the question of the future of Norwegian whaling and its access to the Community. Our position is clear: we will not even begin to contemplate commercial whaling unless a series of essential preconditions are met. First, the stocks should be in a healthy state, based on the very best scientific evidence available. Secondly, we should be satisfied about the humaneness of killing whales. As the hon. Gentleman said, we are a long way from obtaining satisfaction on that. I shall go into more detail on that, despite the fact that it is a gory subject, as the hon. Gentleman would recognise. Thirdly, full, effective and transparent means of monitoring and observing whaling operations which command international respect should be in place. We have not even started to elaborate that dossier and the Kyoto meeting will take the first steps towards that.

There is an argument about the state of the stocks and the scientific evidence about them. One's decision about whether they are sustainable is based on whether one wants to hunt them and is a function of that hunting. As to the humaneness of the killing and effective monitoring, we are nowhere near reaching a decision to the effect that we might wish to bring the moratorium to an end.

We have been a firm supporter of the moratorium on commercial whaling and we played an important role in getting it agreed. It was established in the 1985-86 season and it can be overturned only by a three quarters majority vote. The United Kingdom has no intention of lending itself to any manoeuvre to dilute that vote. As the hon. Gentleman said, certain members of the International Whaling Commission use their wealth—I put it no better than that—to influence the votes of less important members of the commission, who have no effective interest in whaling and whose membership of the commission stems from historical reasons.

That moratorium was long overdue because the former management procedures were discredited. The state of the stocks were giving rise to serious concern, although many of the great whales, which had been seriously over-hunted, had been protected since the 1960s and, in some cases, from even earlier. The remaining stocks of the commercial species were, however, under immense pressure.

[Mr. David Curry]

We have also taken a strong stance on the question of humane killing. We played a major part in getting the so-called "cold" or non-explosive harpoon banned by the IWC. We have consistently pressed humaneness issues in the commission and we promoted a three-day study of them at the previous commission meeting in Glasgow. We secured a consensus for the 11-point action plan to promote further investigation into equipment, methods, times to death and other similar difficult details, including improvement in the analysis and presentation of past and present data on whaling and regular progress reviews. As I said, we believe that the present methods have a long way to go before they could even remotely be described as humane. Enormous concern remains about the time of death and secondary killing methods such as using rifles and cold harpoons to dispatch the whales that have not been killed quickly.

It is equally true that we must have credible, open and thoroughly effective schemes for observation and enforcement, plus minimum data standards, and we do not believe that we can rely on national inspection by the whaling nations alone. That would not be acceptable. Although the hon. Gentleman did not mention it, we are equally concerned about the Faroese whale hunt and we know what public opinion is on that. We were active in Glasgow in that respect, trying to focus concerns over that fishery and seeking improvements in the killing methods and linking that with the general resolution on humane killing. We have consistently pressed for significant improvements in that conduct, through the commission, and we will continue to do so. We look for a positive response to last year's resolution.

A number of issues will have to be discussed in Kyoto. The first is the maintenance of the moratorium on commercial whaling. The preconditions have not been met. We are keenly interested in the proposals for the whale sanctuary circling the polar regions. As the hon. Gentleman knows, they were submitted too late for consideration at the last commission meeting, but will come forward this time. That is an interesting and challenging approach and we see strong parallels with the United Kingdom's approach, which was adopted at the commission last year, based on global environmental threats and the way in which those can impact on cetacean stocks and their management.

We also wish to promote another aspect, which may be one of the best ways forward—ecotourism, or allowing people to go to look at whales. In other words, whales can be used in a way that will allow people to benefit from that remarkable creation. It is a non-lethal alternative to commercial whaling. It could be a commercial industry. It is fast growing. We reckon that in 1991 it generated an income of £185 million world wide. That is a perfect form of co-existence between human beings who have a fascination for the creatures and the creatures themselves. It will also generate income for communities that were dependent on whaling.

We must make further progress on humane killing. Japan and Norway have been put on notice and detailed work on the further protection of small cetaceans is required to build on the success of a number of United Kingdom co-sponsored resolutions last year which highlighted those threatened species. We have kept in close touch with the environmental groups connected with whales and their protection and conservation. The Department has already had meetings with organisations such as Greenpeace, the Environmental Investigation Agency, the RSPCA and the World Wide Fund for Nature. Some of them were represented on our delegation last year and my right hon. Friend the Minister is due to meet them later this month in the run-up to Kyoto. We look forward to participation and continuing close co-operation in Kyoto and beyond.

As my hon. Friend said—on the last day of the term, on this issue, perhaps we might be permitted to breach the normal conventions—Norway started a major scientific whaling programme last year. Substantial numbers of minke whales have been taken and there were failures in harpoon technology. The scientific programme was strongly criticised by the commission last year in terms of both its purpose and scale. Norway declared at the beginning of last year's meeting that she would start commercial whaling this year, whatever decisions were taken by the International Whaling Commission. It has been suggested that Norway could retune the IWC computer catch limit model to produce the numbers of minke whales that it wanted. One has to be careful, if one cannot get the external evidence to suit one, not to start playing around with the numbers that come up on the screen.

We find Norway's claim incomprehensible, as the hon. Member has said, coming from a nation which prides itself on its environmental record and its declared wish to work through and not against international organisations. Therefore, Norwegian actions have been condemned here and abroad and have clearly cost Norway's reputation dear. It is curious that a nation which most people would regard as a model for a certain concept of international responsibility should depart from that for an industry, which, looked at objectively in the light of Norway's declared aims for her future, seems to be incapable of being sustained in any case. That seems counterproductive, self-destructive and short term.

We are clear that Norway's actions are incompatible with Community regulations on whales, on the protection of species under CITES and with the habitats directive. The Commission takes the same view on the de facto ban on whaling and we have made it clear to Norway that she has to accept this as part of the aquis of coming into the Community. In practice, Norwegian accession would mean the end of Norwegian whaling in EC territorial waters and the end of any possibility of trade in whale products. We can at least look forward to that as an important step on the way to ending this practice.

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock till Wednesday 14 April, pursuant to the Resolution [1 April].

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 April 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Newbury, in the room of the hon. Mrs. Sybil Judith Chaplin, deceased.—*[Mr. David Lightbown.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Russia

1. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Russian Foreign Secretary over the last four weeks on relations between the United Kingdom and Russia; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Mr. Kozyrev in Moscow on 2 April, and will see him in Tokyo tomorrow, with our G7 partners. I also met Mr. Kozyrev in Moscow on 27 March. Our relations with Russia are excellent. In our contacts we have repeated our support for the economic and political reforms which President Yeltsin and his Government have pursued.

Mr. Ancram: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that full reply. Will he assure the House that, at this time of considerable political uncertainty in Russia in the lead-up to the referendum, he and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will make it clear to their counterparts that future aid, both technical and economic, from this country in particular and the west in general will be contingent on continued economic and political reform, continued improvements in human rights and swift withdrawal from the Baltic states?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The purpose of supporting economic change in Russia is, at least in part, to support the process towards genuine political pluralism. Therefore, we want to make it plain to all that our support is dependent on that continued process; at the same time, we want to ensure that such economic aid as we make available is most likely to underpin a genuine restructuring of the economy.

Mr. Winnick: Is there full agreement between Russia and Britain on the need for substantial progress in South Africa? Have the Russian Government and the British Government come to the conclusion that what happened over the weekend—the tragic assassination of Chris Hani—was a terrible disaster? I hope that the British Government will make their views known clearly and publicly as soon as possible. Does the Minister agree that it should be made perfectly clear that the peace process in South Africa should continue—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is totally out of order. The question relates to relations between the United Kingdom and Russia. If the hon. Gentleman has a question directed to that subject I shall hear it, but he must not abuse the House as he is doing.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister agree that both Russia and Britain should come to the conclusion that the peace process in South Africa should continue as quickly as possible?—*[Interruption]*.

Madam Speaker: Order. We will now move on. I call Mr. John Marshall.

Know-how Funds

2. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the know-how funds available for eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The purpose of the know-how fund is to support economic and political reform in central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and the Baltic states. Since the fund was launched in 1989, we have spent more than £100 million. The budget for 1993-94 is £54·3 million.

Mr. Marshall: May I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer and congratulate the know-how funds on being much more cost-effective than the European bank for reconstruction and development, the excesses of which are an affront to the people and the taxpayers of this country?

Mr. Hogg: I shall certainly accept that compliment in the spirit in which it was tendered.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister know that the President of Lithuania, the governor of his bank and others are in this country at the moment searching for more help from the know-how funds and generally? Does the Minister accept that now is the time for such help to be given while those countries are on the path to democracy and seeking to remain with the west? If the Government wait too long, there may be disaster.

Mr. Hogg: I certainly agree that economic aid plays an important part in underpinning and supporting political reform. However, it is important to keep in mind the fairly limited nature of the know-how funds and their principal purpose, which is the transfer of technical know-how. That said, if the Lithuanians have proposals that they wish us to consider, I shall be willing to have them examined.

France

3. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on relations with France.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): We enjoy close and friendly relations with France based on many shared interests, included membership of the European

Community, the Security Council, NATO, the Group of 7 and many other international organisations. In recent years close practical co-operation has increased as a result of the world-wide role of our two countries. We expect the close relationship to continue with the new Government.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is there not something faintly disreputable about a country which expects to be able to export a high proportion of the food that it produces but which takes minimal action against its own producers when they burn lorry loads of live English lamb and wreck consignments of fish? Should we not gently tell our French partners that they have no right to deny European consumers, who already subsidise them through taxes, a wider and freer choice of food by trying to wreck the GATT round which has been so painstakingly negotiated and which is so near to a successful conclusion?

Mr. Garel-Jones: France is our third largest trading partner. My hon. Friend is right in the sense that France has not only a population similar to that of the United Kingdom but similar consumer interests. I certainly believe that the French stand to gain more from an open market approach than from the sort of protectionist approach that my hon. Friend mentions. We have no reason to believe that the French Government are about to adopt protectionist policies. The new Government have inherited some difficult policy decisions but remain committed to working within the European Community framework for a successful conclusion to the GATT round.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that it is no wonder that France has friendly relations with Britain when we consider that its trading surplus with us is very large and that we are running a trade deficit with France? Part of the reason for that is that we subsidise French electricity and then kindly buy an amount equivalent to about 6 million tonnes of coal. If this Minister and the Tory Government had any guts at all, they would tell the French that we intend to cut the interconnector and save the British pits.

Mr. Garel-Jones: This Minister and this Government believe in free trade. It is our intention and our policy, wherever possible, to ensure that the British consumer gets the best value, whether in energy, food or in any other matter.

European Foreign Policies

4. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We meet our European partners regularly to discuss the strengthening of intergovernmental co-operation on foreign policy.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the foreign affairs and security provisions in the Maastrich treaty build on the concept of political co-operation, which was an important part of the Single European Act? Does he further agree that this country has played a major part in the development of that political co-operation?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. European political co-operation and the single market were two of the great achievements of the Single European Act. The Government have played and will continue to play a forward role in European political co-operation and in the common foreign and security policy when it is set up after ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: Does the Minister agree that those of us who support ratification of the Maastricht treaty must be mindful of the criticisms being made of western Europe and the European Community—by, among others, Baroness Thatcher last night—in relation to the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia? Will the Minister take the opportunity to remind the House and others outside that what that means is that we must ratify Maastricht, build on those provisions and move towards a more united and coherent defence and foreign policy for the European Community as a whole so that tragedies of that nature within our own perimeter of influence can be much more urgently addressed?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that he hopes for a peaceful settlement in Yugoslavia. That rests on the Vance-Owen initiative, which has been strongly supported by the European Community and this Administration.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to discuss with his opposite number in Paris the possible withdrawal of General Philippe Morillon from his United Nations command in Bosnia? Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to that highly controversial general, who, none the less, has shown great dedication to the cause of the United Nations and whose courage is exemplary?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall be travelling to Paris on Friday to meet my new opposite number. I will not hesitate to pay tribute to the courage and dedication of General Morillon.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does the Minister accept that, where possible, European Community foreign policies should be welcome and effective? In that connection, will he work with our European partners to construct a common foreign policy towards South Africa, and particularly to assist in progress towards a democratic, non-racial South Africa? Should not Europe unite in condemning the appalling brutal murder of Chris Hani, which is a tragedy for the whole of South Africa? Should we not also welcome the statesmanship of Nelson Mandela in appealing for calm and continued progress and work towards a democratic, non-racial South Africa?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I certainly join the right hon. Gentleman in applauding the approach that Mr. Mandela has taken. I think that Mr. Mandela and this Government are right to believe that the best tribute to the man who has been assassinated is to continue to pursue the peace process. Certainly the European Community, through the election monitors it has sent and the police training it has offered, is supporting the democratic forces for change in South Africa.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Returning to the question put by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), does my right hon. Friend agree that what is needed is not just the courage shown by the French general and many of the troops of all nations in the United

Nations force in the former Yugoslavia, but to build on the emotional demands for a rational way forward so that we make matters not worse but better?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. Like me, he will not be surprised that many Members and also people outside the House feel very strongly about what is going on in the former Yugoslavia, given the horrific nature of the events taking place there. Nevertheless, the course that the Government and the European Community have pursued—that of support for the Owen-Vance initiative, difficult furrow though it is to plough—is the right one.

Middle East

6. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he is planning in support of the middle east peace process.

10. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the middle east peace conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The American and Russian co-sponsors of the middle east peace process have issued invitations to a further round of bilateral negotiations in Washington on 20 April. The Israelis have accepted the invitation. The Arab parties are in Washington this week for consultations, which we hope will result in their agreement to resume negotiations.

Mr. Watson: Will the Minister join me in welcoming the acceptance by the Israeli authorities of the appointment of Mr. Feisal Husseini as leader of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks? Does the Minister accept that that gives at least some hope of a way forward, particularly as Mr. Husseini is from east Jerusalen and is a resident of that city? In terms of legitimising the position of east Jerusalem as an occupied territory, in line with EC policy, can the Minister confirm that one way to move forward the peace talks would be for President Clinton to urge the Israeli authorities to adopt resolutions 242 and 338 so that the peace talks could begin to move forward in a meaningful way?

Mr. Hogg: I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Feisal Husseini a little whole ago. I certainly recognise the important role that he plays in the peace negotiations and I welcome any step that promotes that role. As to resolutions 242 and 338, it is important for all of us to recognise that negotiations within the peace process must move forward on the basis of those two Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Streeter: While recognising the frustration of many Palestinians, does not my right hon. and learned Friend roundly condemn the recent murderous attacks on Israeli citizens and soldiers in parts of the occupied territories? Does he agree that that does not contribute to the peace process? Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to put pressure on moderate Palestinian leaders to reduce the level of violence and give peace a chance?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a very real point. About 69 Palestinians and 22 Israelis have been killed since the beginning of this year. That is lamentable. Escalating violence is something that we all deplore as strongly as we can, and it reinforces the importance of all the parties getting back into bilateral talks as speedily as possible.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister will have seen reports in the press at the weekend of the death of Mohammed Suweiti, a citizen of Hebron, who was unable to travel from Hebron to Jerusalem for essential hospital treatment because of the closure of the west bank. Does the Minister not agree that the closure of the west bank and the division of the occupied territories into three is itself a form of collective punishment? If we are to encourage the Palestinians to return to the peace table, does the Minister agree that one of his roles is to seek assurances from the Israeli Government that they, as an occupying power, accept their responsibilities under the fourth Geneva convention?

Mr. Hogg: On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, yes, indeed—the fourth Geneva convention applies to the occupation by the Israelis of the occupied territories. To take the hon. Gentleman's question more broadly, he is right indeed to deplore the fact that both Gaza and the occupied territories have been closed and that the flow of occupants of those two areas into Israel where previously they worked is very restricted. That will not promote a peace settlement. We need to do all that we can to persuade the Israelis to lift the burden of the occupation.

Mr. Rathbone: In the light of the Palestinian slaughter and the deportation of Palestinians from Israel, can my right hon. and learned Friend tell us how the talks with representatives of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation are going?

Mr. Hogg: I am not quite sure to which group of people my hon. Friend is referring at this point. What we want to do is to see all the parties to the bilaterals return to those bilaterals as speedily as possible. That means accepting the invitation to attend on 20 April.

Mr. George Robertson: May I reinforce two of the points that the Minister has made to the House? First, I join him in condemning all the violence in the occupied territories and in Israel, wherever that violence comes from; none of it helps the peace process, nor will it lead to an ultimate solution for either side. Secondly, I join him in welcoming the reports that the Israeli Government are willing to recognise that Mr. Feisal Husseini, a resident of east Jerusalem, should be given his rightful position as the spokesman and leader of the Palestinian community in those talks. That would be a step forward—as would the rumoured move by the Israeli Government to allow some long-standing exiled deportees to return to their native land for the first time in many years. As the Minister pushes the urgency of the middle east peace process further and further up the agenda, notwithstanding all the competition that it faces, will he ensure that the Israeli Government comply both with international law and with international civilised standards so as to ensure that whatever punishment they mete out to the civilian Palestinian population is not so disproportionate as the present decision to close off the occupied territories seems to be?

Mr. Hogg: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his first two points and for the support that he has given the

Government. I agree entirely about welcoming the possibility of allowing people who were deported some considerable time ago to return to Israel and I agree with the general point about the proportionality of any response to acts of violence, but it would be very much easier for the Israeli Government to make progress in the talks if the violence being committed by the Palestinians were to stop.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the peace process in the middle east would be much enhanced if all middle eastern states signed the international convention banning chemical weapons and had equal opportunities to participate in the watchdog organisation set up under that convention? What steps is he taking to promote that process?

Mr. Hogg: The point that my hon. Friend makes about the chemical convention, in particular—and, by implication, weapons of mass destruction in general—is wholly correct. We want all the parties to ratify, and thereafter implement, the chemical warfare convention. We must work to achieve the removal from the middle east of weapons of mass destruction, but those desirable and essential objectives are unlikely fully to be achieved unless and until there is a general settlement within the framework of the current peace process.

Maastricht Treaty (Danish Referendum)

7. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Danish Government about the forthcoming referendum on the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed this and other issues with the Danish Foreign Minister, Mr. Helveg Petersen, in London on 22 March.

Mr. Salmond: Did the Foreign Secretary at any stage communicate to his Danish counterpart the view held by Members both for and against Maastricht and also substantially by people outside the House—that Maastricht is exactly the sort of constitutional issue which should be decided by the people in a referendum? Is there any prospect of the Government accepting that strong viewpoint and changing tack, or will they merely depend on Labour Front-Bench spokesmen to bail them out in the vote next week?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No, there is no such prospect: the Government, like previous British Governments, will depend on the will of the House.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Has the Minister been able to clarify whether it remains the position of the Government that they will not seek to invite the House to approve the Third Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill until after the Danes have had their second referendum? Is that still the position?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, that remains the position.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister recall that in a recent written answer he stated that the obligations placed on Denmark by the treaty on European union signed at Maastricht were not changed by the decision reached intergovernmentally at Edinburgh? In that case, will not the question that the Danish people have to answer on 18 May be substantially, if not exactly, the same as they answered previously?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I recall that answer, but the question put to the Danish people and the answer that they give are matters for the Danish Government and the Danish people and not for me.

Hong Kong

8. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Governor of Hong Kong's constitutional proposals for the colony.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): We support the Governor's proposals for broadening democracy in Hong Kong. We have long wanted to hold discussions with the Chinese Government on these proposals with the aim of achieving a smooth transition in 1997. We and the Chinese Government announced yesterday that talks on these issues will start in Peking on 22 April.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fact that talks are now resuming with China vindicates the firm position taken by the Governor of Hong Kong on extending democracy in Hong Kong? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that representatives of the Hong Kong community will be at the negotiations, and will he ensure that the Chinese do not use the negotiations as a means of prolonging the process to prevent the introduction of the electoral law and the widening of democracy in the 1995 elections in the way that the Governor wishes?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. As we have said, the talks are between the two sovereign powers. The British representative will be Sir Robin McLaren, Her Majesty's ambassador in Peking. Other officials from the British and Hong Kong Governments will participate in the talks in exactly the same way as they have in the past.

On the question of timing, we and the Hong Kong Government need to have legislation in place in good time for the district board elections in 1994 and the Legislative Council elections in 1995. We therefore want quick progress, but there is quite a lot of difficult ground to cover.

We are going into these talks with the aim of reaching an understanding, but not at any price. It remains an essential point for us and the Governor that elections held under British administration should be fair, open and acceptable to the people of Hong Kong.

Dr. Bray: Is it the Government's intention to continue to consult widely the people of Hong Kong, including their elected representatives in the Legislative Council, during the progress of the talks with China?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether he feels that the Chinese Government are keeping to the letter and spirit of the treaty between the Government and the Chinese Government on the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty in 1997? Judging from China's record so far, does he believe that China will

keep to the treaty after the handover? Do we have any way of renegotiating the treaty or getting out of it if we feel that China is not meeting its obligations?

Mr. Goodlad: The Chinese leaders say that they will abide by the joint declaration and the Basic Law. Under the joint declaration, we are of course responsible for administering Hong Kong until July 1997.

Mr. Rogers: We warmly welcome the recommencement of talks as laid out in the proposals announced yesterday. However, may I say that we hope that, during future negotiations, the minimal democratic propositions put forward by the Governor are at least adhered to and that, in whatever negotiations come about, the people of Hong Kong will finally have a say, rather than the British Government alone?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As I said, our aim is to reach an understanding with China on arrangements to ensure that the elections will be fair, open and acceptable to the people of Hong Kong. If we reach an understanding with China, the British and Hong Kong Governments will recommend it to the Legislative Council and it will be for it to pass the necessary legislation.

Bosnia

9. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's involvement in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Britain is playing a major role in efforts to restore peace in Bosnia and to provide humanitarian relief for millions of civilians caught up in the conflict. We are the largest single national troop contributor to the United Nations protection force in Bosnia, escorting relief convoys. Our troops and aid workers are doing a magnificent job in difficult and often dangerous circumstances. We have also devoted considerable material resources to the aid operation.

Mr. Illsley: Will the Minister take this opportunity to distance the Government from the suggestions made by Baroness Thatcher which, if implemented, would perhaps lead to an extension of the conflict in Bosnia, to the further killing of military and civilian personnel and would perhaps jeopardise the humanitarian aid effort? Does he also agree that the situation in Bosnia cannot be allowed to continue and that existing sanctions should be properly enforced and tougher sanctions implemented?

Mr. Hogg: The broad nature of the policy that we are currently pursuing is, I think, the right one and the one to which we should hold. We need to continue to put all the pressure that we can on Serbia to get Serbia to induce the Bosnian Serbs to sign up to the Vance-Owen plan. That must be the heart of the policy. I think, too, that it is desirable that the sanctions be yet further tightened. As the hon. Gentleman will know, there is a draft resolution to hand, but, for reasons that I think are good, it has been decided to defer the vote on the resolution until the end of April—but I hope that if the resolution is passed its implementation will be immediate and that no grace period, has proposed in the original draft, will be provided.

Mr. Cormack: I do not wish to do anything other than praise the bravery of our British troops, but may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to agree that our right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher, with whom I do not always agree, spoke for many people yesterday when she talked of the sense of horror and shame that people throughout this country feel when they see our troops having to stand by while women and children are shot down? Will my right hon. and learned Friend talk to the Foreign Secretary on the telephone today and ask him to summon an urgent meeting of his fellow Foreign Ministers so that we can begin to act a little more effectively?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is clearly right when he describes what is going on in Bosnia as a tragedy and a crime. I do not suppose that a more appalling set of events has taken place since the end of the second world war. But on the question of shame—no, I cannot agree with him, because I look at what British troops in Bosnia are doing. We have 2,600 men there performing acts of great courage and gallantry. We—or rather, I should say, they—have escorted some 448 convoys conveying something like 33,399 tonnes of supply. I am proud of that contribution.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Does the Minister accept that Lady Thatcher is not alone in believing that the present arms embargo plays into the hands of the Croats and the Serbs, and places the Bosnian Muslims at a great disadvantage? Does he further accept that there is an increasing feeling that the arms embargo should be partially lifted so that the Bosnian Muslims will at least be able to defend themselves against the atrocities being committed against their nation?

Mr. Hogg: I do not try to deny that a case can be argued for lifting the arms embargo, but I put to the House two considerations that point in the opposite direction. The first is that if we were to lift the arms embargo for the Bosnian Muslims I believe that others would speedily supply arms to the Croats and the Bosnian Serbs. That would not bring about an early ceasefire. The second consideration, which I find even more persuasive, is that it would take time for the arms to be delivered to the Bosnian Muslims and even more time for those people to be trained and expert in their use. I ask what would happen in the meantime; and I answer that rhetorical question by saying that the Bosnian Serbs would be likely to redouble their aggression so as to grab yet more land against the possibility that the Muslims might be in a better position thereafter.

Mr. William Powell: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the continuing horror caused by the evidence of alleged war crimes in the former Yugoslavia, not least that now forwarded by the International Red Cross to the special commissioners appointed under UN resolution 780? Is he aware that under resolution 808 the Secretary-General has to report by 22 April on the proposals to establish an ad hoc tribunal to try and, if necessary, punish people alleged to have been engaged in war crimes? Will he do all that he can on behalf of the British Government to ensure that such a tribunal is established as quickly as possible?

Mr. Hogg: I am, indeed, aware of the resolution. I am also aware that the Secretary-General has been commissioned to report back to the Security Council by the end of April on ways in which to carry forward the holding of a war crimes tribunal. I think that that is an important object of policy and, to the extent that it is

possible—one must recognise the difficulties—that people who are guilty or who are alleged to be guilty of war crimes need to be brought before that tribunal and punished appropriately.

Dr. John Cunningham: Do not the Government recognise that even for those of us who have supported the peace process and the decisions of the Security Council, the policy of the United Nations appears to be falling apart in Bosnia? Is not it clear that sanctions are being widely breached by certain countries, including Russia, and should not any aid to Mr. Yeltsin be contingent on his obeying the mandatory sanctions against Serbia imposed by the Security Council?

Is not it also clear that the humanitarian aid programme is in danger of failing not because the High Commissioner has not organised convoys, but because members of the United Nations, including members of the European Community, have failed to keep their promises to provide food aid for Bosnia? Are we to stand aside and watch the slaughter of perhaps 50,000 innocent civilians in Srebrenica? Are not those all reasons why we should have an immediate recall of the Security Council to discuss the deteriorating situation in Bosnia? Is not it deplorable that the Government have agreed to delay those discussions in the Security Council for two weeks, apparently at the request of Mr. Yeltsin?

Mr. Hogg: Our purpose—it must be—is to achieve continued consensus within the Security Council, because it is only by maintaining a united front between the five permanent members that we can hope to continue to place great pressure on Serbia. Against that background, we must consider the request by the Russian Government not to put the matter to the vote until the end of April. Our purpose must be to keep Russian consent, because if we lose it, the ability of the Security Council to act effectively will disappear entirely. That is the thinking behind our decision to accede to the Russian request. I believe that it was a right decision.

United States

11. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations beween the EC and the USA.

Mr. Garel-Jones: EC-US relations are close, crucially important and wide ranging, including especially trade relations and political dialogue. We are committed to maintaining and developing this relationship on the basis of the November 1990 EC-US declaration which sets out shared aims and principles. The next EC-US summit will take place in Washington on 7 May.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital for both the European Community and the United States that there is a successful outcome to the negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade? Will he confirm that the Government will do everything in their power to ensure that the protectionist tendencies of Mr. Delors, of French politicians and of some within the Clinton Administration are not allowed to stand in the way of a successful outcome to those negotiations?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of a successful conclusion to the GATT Uruguay round. I assure him that the Government will continue to give the highest priority to that. The initial signals coming from the new United States Administration are encouraging. The trade representative, Mr. Kantor, recently confirmed President Clinton's commitment to a more open trading system and to the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round. He also confirmed the United States Administration's commitment to seeking an extension to the fast track authority, which is also a very positive step.

As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), the new French Administration have inherited some difficult problems from their predecessors. I am convinced that France has as much to gain as any other country in the Community from a successful conclusion to the Uruguay round, not least because it is the largest exporter of services in the whole of the European Community and would have a great deal to gain from a successful conclusion to this round.

Mr. Hain: But could the Minister press for a joint initiative between the EC and the United States of America to put pressure on the South African Government to ensure that white terrorism is rooted out from both the community and the security forces? The tragic death of Chris Hani over the weekend is a clear example of the way in which white terrorists are being assisted——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have again to call an hon. Member to order. The hon. Gentleman started out reasonably but moved so far away from the question that his remarks really were out of order. I ask all hon. Members to look at the questions very carefully, and not to try to put one over on the Speaker, as they sometimes do.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: No. We will now move on.

South Korea

14. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with South Korea.

Mr. Goodlad: Our relations are excellent. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary paid a successful visit to the Republic of Korea last week. He had full and useful exchanges with—among others—the President, the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister. As well as bilateral matters, their discussions covered regional and international issues, including North Korea, market access, trade, technology co-operation, investment and the European Community. This was a very good opportunity to establish contact with the new South Korean Administration. My right hon. Friend also met and had useful discussions with representatives of the British business community.

Mr. Bellingham: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that extremely informative reply. Does he share South Korea's grave concern about North Korea's threatened withdrawal from the non-proliferation treaty? Does he agree that that poses the threat of destabilisation throughout the region and that there is an urgent need for the International Atomic Energy Agency to move in and

carry out an inspection? Will he seek the support of the Government of the People's Republic of China in putting pressure on North Korea?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. North Korea's announcement of its intention to withdraw from the non-proliferation treaty is a cause for great concern and its refusal to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency's special inspections gives further cause to question the intentions of the North Korean Government. The United Kingdom is determined to maintain and strengthen the non-proliferation treaty. We urge North Korea to reconsider its position and we intend to explore all possible avenues with our Security Council colleagues to persuade North Korea to change its mind.

My hon. Friend is quite right that China has a vital role to play in attempts to persuade the North Koreans to reverse their position and we look to the Chinese to exercise that responsibility. We also attach the greatest importance to full co-operation among all states on the Security Council, especially the permanent five.

Hong Kong

16. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when and where he intends to have talks with the Government of the People's Republic of China on the development of democracy in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We and the Chinese Government announced yesterday that talks on Hong Kong's electoral arrangements will begin in Peking on 22 April. Our aim will be to reach an understanding with the Chinese side on arrangements which will ensure that elections are fair, open and acceptable to the people of Hong Kong. If we can reach such an understanding, we and the Hong Kong Government will recommend it to Hong Kong's Legislative Council. It will be for that body to pass the necessary legislation.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that although it was the Governor who tabled the proposals for constitutional change in Hong Kong, those proposals were, none the less, the recommendations of Her Majesty's Government and have the broad support of hon. Members on both sides of the House? Furthermore, they are within the Basic Law. If the People's Republic of China thinks otherwise, it would help the proposed talks if the Chinese were to be specific about the respects in which they think that the proposals depart from the Basic Law so that those matters can be addressed in detail before the talks take place.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct in every particular.

Mr. Kaufman: The Minister keeps talking about reaching an understanding with China. Is it not a fact that any understanding with China can result only in a further watering down of proposals that were already grossly inadequate in terms of what the Hong Kong Legislative Council and OMELCO have asked for? Is it not also a fact that continual caving in to Chinese tactics of delay and dilution will result in there being very little democracy indeed to be handed over in 1997?

Mr. Goodlad: The right hon. Gentleman's views are well known to the House. I can reiterate only that the outcome of the talks will be placed before the Legislative Council in Hong Kong and will, we hope, be acceptable to the people of Hong Kong.

Peru

17. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Peruvian ambassador to discuss the democratic process in that country.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last discussed Peru with the Peruvian ambassador on 18 November 1992. I visited Lima from 7 to 9 January and was able to assess the progress that Peru has made in restoring democratic government.

Mr. McFall: Is the Minister aware that when I visited Peru last year, I witnessed for myself the evil which the Sendero Luminoso is perpetrating on the people of Peru? However, there is no social welfare programme in that country, and the more President Fujimori goes ahead with his proposals and ignores the social reality, the worse it will be for the western world, particularly in relation to drugs. When the Secretary of State next meets the ambassador, will he impress on him the overall need for democracy in Peru so that that helps the people of that country?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his perfectly correct remarks about Sendero Luminoso which is probably the most horrific terrorist organisation operating anywhere on the globe today. We must recognise that since the autumn coup—as I believe it is called—President Fujimori has made progress in the restoration of democracy and the new constitutional assembly holds out considerable hope for the future of Peru. When I was there, I was able to speak not only to the Speaker of that assembly, but to a number of human rights groups. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that, in the end, although the activities of Sendero Luminoso may be challenging and deeply repulsive, the route to its defeat must be through the proper restoration of full democratic human rights in Peru.

Malaysia

20. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have taken place with the Government of Malaysia on United Kingdom-Malaysian relations.

Mr. Goodlad: I visited Malaysia from 1 to 5 April and was able to see at first hand that our relations with Malaysia are excellent. I met the Minister of Finance, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim—who had himself visited the United Kingdom earlier this year—and had wide-ranging discussions with him and a number of his ministerial colleagues. I also visited the free trade zone in Penang and the Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Is it not important that British firms should try to secure contracts in respect of the new Kuala Lumpur airport? What are the Government doing to assist?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is plenty of scope for British firms to increase British business in Malaysia; the new planned airport at Sepang is an important example of that. In February, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister offered up to £42 million-worth of grant finance to be used in association with export credits and contracts that may be awarded to British companies of up to £120 million-worth of United Kingdom goods and services for the planned new airport. Any firm commitment will be subject to the usual appraisal procedures and contacts with our Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development partners in line with internationally agreed rules on the provision of tied aid. I very much hope that our companies will be successful.

Mr. Dalyell: As the Minister said that he visited the forestry institute, what did it say about the rate of logging and the destruction of rain forest in Sabah and Sarawak and on the Malaysian mainland?

Mr. Goodlad: Nothing, Madam Speaker.

Serbia and Montenegro

21. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to improve the effectiveness and impact of United Nations and European Community sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have provided customs personnel to the sanctions assistance missions, which are helping Serbia's neighbours enforce sanctions more effectively, and £100,000 to establish a communications network along the Danube. I am confident that sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro are already having an impact, but sanctions may need to be tightened still further to put pressure on the Serbs to sign the Vance-Owen plan; further action is under consideration in New York.

Mr. Mackinlay: Has the Minister had an opportunity to read the report of the debate in European Standing Committee B which, a few weeks ago, probed the Government on the policing and implementation of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro as they relate to this country? It was shown that there was an hiatus and an unsatisfactory system of controlling and policing exports from the United Kingdom to the former states of Yugoslavia. Further, there was an indication from the Minister that Greece was, to say the least, sloppy in its policing of the sanctions regime. Will the Minister bear that in mind and tell us whether the Government have taken measures to ensure that the United Kingdom is rigorously applying the sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro and that there is no sloppiness on behalf of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hogg: It is certainly our intention rigorously to impose sanctions and I am not aware of any shortcomings. If the hon. Gentleman—or any other hon. Member, for that matter—has evidence of substantial shortcomings, the Government will be anxious to look at it.

The point has been made to Greece on a number of occasions that it is important that all Community members most vigorously and rigorously eforce the sanctions. As the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) knows, there is a draft resolution in New York that will further tighten the sanctions regime if it is voted for in the Security Council.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is one thing to have tight sanctions to try to bring the parties in the former Yugoslavia to their senses and to a peaceful resolution, but that it is another thing to start talking from the comfort of another place about military intervention, which would mean that the fighting forces in Yugoslavia would move into the towns where the bombing would be on civilians and children?

Ms Eagle: It already is.

Mr. Dickens: Yes. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that many people in the United Kingdom and, indeed, the Chamber would be aggrieved if the British armed forces were used in a warlike manner in the former Yugoslavia? The people who are crying for military intervention would soon be crying for the bodies of our men and women if they were returned in body bags to Southampton and other airports.

Mr. Hogg: I agree with a lot of what my hon. Friend said. It seems that there are two different sorts of military action that one should consider. The first is whether it would be right to deploy United Kingdom ground troops in an aggressive role—and then the question is whether it would be right in what is effectively a civil war to take action that would condemn probably a substantial number of British soldiers to die. That is a question which the House must consider. My view is that it would not be right.

A different question is whether it would be right in any circumstances to use air power. That question is constantly kept under review because there is a case to be made for it. Against that, there are serious disadvantages associated with that policy. So far, it has been held—in my view, rightly—that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

Ms Short: Does the Minister agree that there are awful parallels between Europe's failure to protect the jews before the second world war and our failure to protect the Bosnians from the systematic use of rape and ethnic cleansing? Is it not proposed that massive ground forces will be put in place if the Vance-Owen proposals are carried? The Serbs are refusing to accept implementation of those proposals. Can we not have an alternative plan at least to create some safe havens for the Bosnians?

Mr. Hogg: There is a distinction to be made between deploying troops in a peacemaking role and deploying troops in a peacekeeping role. So far as the latter is concerned, if there were a genuine agreement and a sustainable ceasefire, and if there were substantial troop contributions from a number of other countries—most notably the United States—and the control and command mechanisms seemed right, we should look sympathetically at a proposal that British troops should be used in a peacekeeping role.

There is a major distinction between that operation and what the hon. Lady is referring to, which is to use troops in a peacemaking role—to enforce peace by military action. I ask the hon. Lady rhetorically: is it right to condemn British soldiers to die for that purpose? I say no.

Commonwealth of Independent States

22. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to support and assist the independent republics of the CIS to ensure a smooth transition to democracy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the development of democratic and economic reforms in all the countries of the former Soviet Union. We contribute to this process through our bilateral aid programmes, such as the know-how fund, and play a substantial part in multilateral efforts. We are doing all that we can to foster contacts and exchanges with the newly independent states through international forums to support democratic processes.

Ms Eagle: Following the demise of the Soviet Union, there is great instability in the former Soviet states that are now independent within the Commonwealth of Independent States. One of the problems is that Ukraine and Kazakhstan have access to nuclear weapons. What is the Government's opinion on trying to force these states to sign strategic arms reduction talks in exchange for aid so that we can help them on the path to democracy and alleviate their poverty?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady is right with her general point that there is instability. We look to the conference on security and co-operation in Europe as the instrument most likely to provide the solution of regional and ethnic problems in the former Soviet Union.

As for nuclear-weapon states, our real concern is focused on Ukraine. That is because the tension between Ukraine and Russia is increasing. The view is expressed in the Ukrainian Parliament that Ukraine should not relinquish its nuclear weapons while there is the tension to which I have referred. We regard that as a disastrous mistake. We shall do all that we can, both by way of negative security assurances and by persuasion, and to some extent by assistance, to persuade the Ukrainians to sign the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear state.

Bosnia

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, I should like to make a statement.

The House will share the Government's feelings of outrage at the artillery attack on Srebrenica on Monday, in which, according to reports, at least 56 people were killed and 70 wounded. That was a new milestone of inhumanity in a conflict which had already spawned many atrocities. On that occasion, as on many others, the Bosnian Serbs appear to have been responsible. We should remember that the Serbs in Bosnia are not uniquely guilty, although they bear the main responsibility for current events in Bosnia. The other parties too have committed crimes. Indeed, the British soldier who was killed in January while escorting a convoy of sick and wounded did not fall to a Serbian bullet.

It is not for want of effort by the international community that those horrors continue. The Government have been at the forefront of these efforts. The London conference last August, co-chaired by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, renewed the search for a negotiated settlement of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia —not only in Bosnia. Since then, the Government have given its fullest support to the efforts of Lord Owen and Mr. Vance to achieve such a settlement.

Success seemed in sight three weeks ago, when the Bosnian Muslims joined the Bosnian Croats in signing all the elements of the Owen-Vance peace plan. It is a matter of the deepest regret that the Bosnian Serbs have not yet been prepared to sign. I hope that, even at this late stage, and despite all that has happened, they will be prepared to reconsider.

Meanwhile, our armed forces have played a leading and distinguished part both in bringing relief to the suffering in Bosnia and in enforcing the arms embargo against the whole of former Yugoslavia and the wider sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Since November, the Cheshire battalion group has escorted more than 33,000 tonnes of food and other humanitarian aid to destinations in Bosnia. RAF Hercules aircraft have flown 427 sorties to Sarajevo, and delivered nearly 6,000 tonnes of aid. Ships of the Royal Navy, assisted by airborne early warning and maritime patrol aircraft of the Royal Air Force, have patrolled the Adriatic and its surrounding air space, alongside allies in NATO and the Western European Union, to enforce the embargo and the sanctions.

Earlier this week, pressure on the warring factions was increased, when NATO aircraft began patrolling Bosnian air space to enforce the no-fly zone in accordance with Security Council resolution 816. RAF Tornado F3s and tankers are on standby to fly to bases in Italy to join in that operation when called forward by SACEUR to do so.

The Government fully share the widespread frustration that diplomacy and military pressure have not yet succeeded, and that the suffering still continues. Other weapons are available. The sanctions noose is being drawn tighter against Serbia, whose future is grim—she faces isolation and economic ruin.

At the same time, the House will recognise that there are no easy solutions to a conflict in which all three ethnic groups have willingly engaged and which has many of the characteristics of a civil war. If there had been, the international community would have applied them long ago. Some argue that, if the outside world is not prepared to intervene militarily, it should at least refrain from enforcing an arms embargo that is bound to favour the Serbs, since they have access to the arsenals of the Yugoslav national army.

That is an understandable argument, but we should be clear where it leads. Removal of the United Nations arms embargo would certainly result in the Bosnian Muslims being free to acquire all the weapons they needed. Presumably, the Bosnian Serbs for their part would also seek more arms from other countries. The result would be to prolong the conflict and to make it even bloodier and more vicious than it is today, bringing continuing suffering to innocent civilians.

In those circumstances, it is difficult to see how UNPROFOR's humanitarian mission could continue. The chances of negotiating aid through the front lines, as at present, would be sharply diminished. Meanwhile, the international consensus would almost certainly have been lost. The United Nations' efforts in former Yugoslavia so far have been made possible by Russian willingness to support the necessary resolutions and to put pressure on the Serbs. That co-operation has been invaluable, but, given the internal situation in Russia, it cannot be taken for granted. It would be unlikely to survive an escalation of the conflict through the removal of the arms embargo.

There have also been calls for the use of air strikes to enforce a peace settlement. There could be circumstances in which the selective use of air power would be relevant. NATO, at the request of the United Nations, is enforcing the no-fly zone at the present time, but the clear military advice received by the Government is that air strikes unsupported by substantial numbers of troops on the ground would be unlikely to be effective given the nature of the conflict, the weapons deployed and the terrain. The chances of civilian casualties would be high. Meanwhile, the risks to British and other United Nations troops, and to the success of the humanitarian relief operation, would remain. While one should not rule out that expedient absolutely, it is one that would change in a fundamental way the role of the UN and bring it into the heart of the conflict as a combatant.

The right course to pursue is the current policy, thankless and frustrating though it is. Diplomacy must continue. Pressure on those responsible for prolonging the conflict must be increased. The plight of the suffering must be alleviated. The international consensus necessary to do all those things must be maintained. They will continue to be the Government's objectives.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I am sure that I speak for the whole House when I say how appalled we all were to see the maiming and murder of innocent victims in Srebrenica and elsewhere in Bosnia. It reminded us graphically of the barbarity of war, and behoves us to redouble our efforts to make sure that this particular war ends as speedily as possible.

We would like to be associated with the Secretary of State's comments about our own troops in Bosnia. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was right to highlight their bravery and fortitude. At no small risk to themselves, those troops ensured that thousands of tonnes of

humanitarian aid got through and saved many lives. It is true to say that, thankfully, our worst fears about starvation have not been realised.

But that raises another point. There have been reports that the United Nations is now running out of food. If that is the case, what are her Majesty's Government doing about that? Is it not offensive that thousands of tonnes of food are rotting away in EC intervention stores when people in Europe are starving? Will the Minister take that on board and see what can be done?

The Secretary of State is right when he says that we cannot lift the arms embargo to the Muslims. It has always seemed to us rather crazy to try to douse a fire with petrol. It never works. Will he confirm that much weaponry is already in the hands of the 190,000 fighters from the three sides of the bloody conflict? Will he further confirm that planes with middle east markings and carrying arms have landed in Croatia?

The Secretary of State is also correct to rule out the use of ground troops before a peace agreement has been made. If it is envisaged that 70,000 troops will be needed to keep the peace after an agreement, has the Secretary of State made any estimate of the number of troops required to contain the fighting before the agreement has been made?

Does the Secretary of State accept that this civil war cannot be solved by external military intervention? If so, why are the Government so reluctant to come forward with new initiatives? Why have the Government agreed with the other G7 members to postpone further urgent discussions on Bosnia in the United Nations Security Council?

If the matter is to be solved by diplomacy, it will be through the United Nations, and we plead with and urge the Government to raise the matter once again in the Security Council. It is truly through diplomacy, pressure and tighter economic sanctions that the Serbs will be made to sign the peace agreement, so that we have the possibility of a lasting peace in that country. There is a feeling of a lack of urgency on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Rifkind: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his tribute to the work being carried out by our forces in Bosnia. It is helpful for their contribution to be seen to be recognised by the House.

The hon. Gentleman can be assured that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will monitor carefully whether extra aid is required to prevent starvation in Bosnia. Fortunately, the effort that has been carried out so far has, as he rightly says, ensured that the predictions of mass starvation have not come about during the winter months, and we wish to ensure that that situation continues.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether middle east aircraft had been seen landing in Bosnia. I cannot confirm the details of that, but we have reason to believe that some arms have been supplied to the Bosnian Muslim forces and to other factions taking part in the war.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the number of troops that might be required if there was to be military intervention in Bosnia. The answer to that would depend on whether such intervention followed the signing of a peace treaty by all three parties and was in the form of a United Nations peacekeeping role, or whether it was to impose a peace settlement that had not been agreed by the parties.

Even if there was agreement to a ceasefire, some 50,000 to 60,000 United Nations forces might be required, and, if there was no peace treaty or ceasefire, clearly the number that would have to be contemplated would be much larger, and, in a situation of continuing warfare in Bosnia, could run into hundreds of thousands.

Her Majesty's Government entirely share the desire to get through as quickly as possible the new United Nations resolution increasing the sanctions proposals. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that that requires unanimity in the Security Council and that Russia has, for reasons that are well known to the hon. Gentleman, asked for some delay in the consideration of that resolution.

That will not necessarily lead to any delay in its implementation. The current resolution before the Security Council allows a 15-day period after it has been passed before it comes into effect. It is possible that, even if there is a delay in passing the resolution, there will not then be a need for that 15-day period to elapse before the new resolution comes into effect. Therefore, the Russians' request may not have the consequences that the hon. Gentleman fears.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I very much welcome the statement of my right hon. and learned Friend, which sets out the difficulties of intervening in the tragic affairs in Bosnia. I particularly welcome the caution that he shows about the proposal that we should indulge in air strikes against Serbian artillery positions. We have many troops sitting under the barrels of Serbian artillery, and I have no doubt that they would be the subject of retaliation the moment that any air attacks were launched. Therefore, will my right hon. and learned Friend give the House an absolute assurance that, should circumstances change and an attack on Serbian artillery positions be contemplated, British troops currently giving humanitarian aid in Bosnia would be withdrawn before such attacks took place?

Mr. Rifkind: We attach the greatest importance to the physical safety and security of the British forces in Bosnia. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is difficult, if not impossible, to see how one could contemplate continuing a humanitarian operation in the name of the United Nations if the United Nations was simultaneously authorising military strikes on the combatants on the ground in the same areas where the United Nations relief operations were taking place. It is difficult, if not impossible, to see how those two objectives could be reconciled.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Although the right hon. and learned Gentleman and I disagree about a number of elements of this matter, I believe him to be fundamentally right in resisting calls for the relaxation of the arms embargo, from whatever quarters those calls may come. However, may I remind him that Srebrenica is territory assigned to the Bosnian Muslims. What military assessment has been made of the prospects of Srebrenica being captured by the Bosnian Serbs who are presently laying seige to it? What political assessment has been made of the consequences for the Vance-Owen plan if the Bosnian Serbs were to succeed in capturing Srebrenica?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his earlier remarks. On the latter part of his question, clearly, any conflict in Bosnia, whether in Srebrenica or elsewhere, goes against the spirit and objectives of the

[Mr. Rifkind]

Vance-Owen plan. We very much hope to achieve a ceasefire by all the parties and an end to the conflict in Srebrenica and elsewhere in order to promote the circumstances to enable a more lasting peace to be achieved throughout Bosnia.

Srebrenica is the most immediate issue, on which our attention is focused—a few weeks ago, it was focused on Sarajevo, and earlier on Dubrovnik. Clearly, a number of localities dominate the headlines at any given time. But unless we can achieve peace throughout Bosnia, local agreements in specific parts of Bosnia will be unlikely to contribute to the overall objectives.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that he and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary are right to warn against the dangers of making policy for the medium term in the emotional heat of the moment? However, does he accept that the present position is untenable and there is a real danger, which we must anticipate, of being dragged into a far wider and more difficult conflict unless some check is imposed on the Serbian-driven expansionism and aggression, which we are presently witnessing, and which is leading to all the blood and slaughter? While I recognise my right hon. and learned Friend's caution and the difficulties faced by all policy makers in such circumstances, may I ask him at least to assure us that we are actively considering such matters with our United States and United Nations allies?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with what my right hon. Friend has said. The thinking behind the tightening of economic sanctions is to bring home to the Serbians the heavy price they pay for their continued activity. It is important not to underestimate the effect that sanctions have already had. Industrial production has come down by more than 40 per cent. since sanctions were imposed, more than 65 per cent. of the work force are unemployed or temporarily laid off, and Serbian figures suggest that the first eight months of sanctions cost Serbia more than $10 billion in lost revenue. Therefore, the sanctions are clearly having a powerful impact on the Serbian economy. We must hope that that will help bring those responsible for that country's policy to their senses.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): What is to be done about men of fighting age in Srebrenica? Will they be given arms so they can defend themselves? Will they be evacuated under United Nations military protection, or will they be left to be slaughtered by the Serbian forces?

Mr. Rifkind: The UN forces in the area are the best judges of how they can contribute to the humanitarian objectives in accordance with the mandate that has been laid down. In recent months, UN forces throughout Bosnia have carried out activities which have been slightly broader than those originally envisaged. We originally expected them to be carrying out obligations in relation to the supply of food and aid. In recent weeks, they have been carrying out additional activities, involving giving transport to refugees wishing to go from war zones to areas of relative peace. It is important to allow the UN that discretion as long as it is consistent with the humanitarian framework—the mandate under which it currently operates.

Mrs. Edwina Currie: (Derbyshire, South): The Secretary of State will be aware that a number of my constituents are serving in Bosnia at the moment. Does he accept that those of us who are reluctant to send thousands more young men and women to that fighting area are acting not from lack of moral courage or lack of moral fibre but from sincere and heartfelt worries about what would happen to our constituents and their families—people to whom we as elected Members have to respond every weekend—should we take any decisions that would embroil them in that dreadful conflict?

Mr. Rifkind: Important moral dimensions have to be taken into account when our service men and service women are asked to go into a war zone. First, we must consider whether it is right and proper for them to be there, and secondly we must consider whether they have a reasonable prospect of carrying out the role for which they have been sent. If one comes, however reluctantly, to the judgment that there is not a military solution to the problem we face, it will not do any service either to the victims of aggression or to the wider moral and ethical issues to take action which one believes is foredoomed to failure.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the general thrust of the statement. I represent people who have already suffered because of the conflict in Bosnia, and I join the Minister in paying tribute to our security forces. We in Northern Ireland have experience of their professionalism, and we have no doubt that they are doing the same sort of job in Bosnia.

I should like to press the Minister on the concept of sanctions. When have sanctions really been effective? Time and again, the House has been assured that they do not work. Does the Secretary of State accept that it is easy to give moral lectures on political courage, as the Prime Minister did recently in Northern Ireland, but that they do not rest well on the shoulders of someone who in her turn yielded moral courage and, at the behest of terrorists, moved towards signing an agreement that yielded to them? The Government should not follow the line proposed by Baroness Thatcher.

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the history of sanctions does not give one great confidence that by themselves they will achieve the desired objective; but that is not to say that they cannot be part of a wider strategy and cannot make an important contribution towards maintaining the maximum pressure on those who are responsible for aggression. Sanctions have a role to play, but only as part of a wider strategy.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealdon): I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement, and especially his cool, rational analysis, and the recognition of his moral obligation to ensure that our troops are not involved in a dispute that is not of their making. I also welcome the recognition of the fact that it is not in the interests of the United Kingdom to plunge British troops into armed intervention in a national civil war. What assessment has been made by NATO high command of the time it would take to involve NATO itself in peacekeeping, should there be an agreement between the three conflicting parties in the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Rifkind: In part, the answer to my hon. Friend's question clearly depends on how much contingency work

has been done in advance of any such ceasefire. It would also depend on the judgment about whether any agreement signed by the three parties could be assumed to be a reliable treaty which they honourably intended to carry out and were able to deliver. We should have to be cautious in seeking to identify whether any treaty that might be signed at some future time was qualitatively different from some of the previous agreements that were signed and then dishonoured almost within minutes of their making.

Such decisions are difficult and delicate. We hope that the Vance-Owen agreement will be signed by the Bosnian Serbs as well as by the other two parties, and that, in signing it, they intend to deliver the commitments into which they have entered.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Since last August, a number of Opposition Members have positively supported the use of military intervention, in the form of air strikes, against Serbian positions because we believe that it is impossible to negotiate with fascism. We believe that fascism sets its objectives and ignores its victims. Fascism is what we have in Serbia. Is not it about time that this country, the European Community, the United Nations and NATO realised that this cancer growing at the very heart of Europe has got to be stopped now before it spreads even further?

Mr. Rifkind: Without commenting on the hon. Gentleman's description of the Serbian or Yugoslav authorities as fascists, I put it to him that there is at least one fundamental flaw in his approach. I understand that he wishes to see military strikes but, along with every hon. Member, does not wish to see the deployment of ground forces. It is difficult to understand that distinction if military might is to be used to achieve the objectives the hon. Gentleman seeks. The hon. Gentleman must consider, if he believes in the use of military power, on what basis he seeks to distinguish between air strikes and the use of all forces which might be available to the international community.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): My right hon. and learned Friend is more aware than most that the Serbs started this conflict with at least 10 times as much military hardware and ammunition supplies as the Muslims. I therefore ask my right hon. and learned Friend the question that I asked our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last November: is it not unprecedented for the United Nations to impose an arms embargo on the victim of military aggression—in this case, the Bosnian Muslims?

Do not the Government see that the inevitable consequence of the present policy is that ethnic cleansing and genocide will continue, because nothing whatsoever is being done by the international community to stop it? Has not the time come to get the Russians on side in this matter at the United Nations, and to threaten the Serbs with selective air strikes in the event that they do not sign up for a ceasefire and the Vance-Owen plan?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct in that, at the beginning of the conflict, the Bosnian Serbs had a preponderance of the military equipment that they inherited from the old Yugoslav armed forces. However, he should take into account the fact that this conflict is not simply an act of aggression by one faction against another. It is the consequence of the collapse of Yugoslavia and the development of a conflict within Bosnia among three sections of the community—all of which are Bosnian—which has many of the characteristics of a civil war.

Although I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of keeping Russian support for the actions of the United Nations—it is necessary if there is to be agreement within the Security Council—I do not believe that that support would be forthcoming for the military strikes that he has simultaneously proposed. He has to choose one or the other: he cannot expect a policy of military intervention to receive Russian support in the Security Council.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Before the United Nations has to go into the ranks of the Conservative party to keep the warring sides apart, will the Secretary of State agree that Margaret Thatcher at least articulated the deep anger and frustration that many people in this country feel about the inability of European Community powers to do anything about the situation in Bosnia? Is it not time to consider giving an ultimatum to the Serbian Government that, unless they are able to bring the Bosnian Serbs to account, there will be strikes against military targets inside Serbia in order to cut off the supply of arms from Serbia to the Bosnian Serbs?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion, which is similiar to that made by my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Thatcher, would fundamentally change the role of the United Nations. The United Nations would then become, consciously and deliberately, a combatant in that war. Although I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman puts forward that view with knowledge of the implications, he must also realise that that would not only terminate the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations, including those of the United Kingdom, but would fundamentally change the whole nature of international involvement in that war, without any certainty or likelihood that it would bring an earlier end to the conflict in question.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am grateful for the compliments paid by my right hon. and learned Friend to the Cheshire battalion group in Bosnia. I agree with the general thrust of his statement, but does he not think that there is a ghastly parallel between the feebleness of the United Nations' stance today and that of the League of Nations, some 60 years ago, against expansionism? I do not know the answer, but it is there and we ought to start to look for it. We cannot find it by military intervention at the moment, but we must start to look beyond sanctions and find another method; otherwise, we shall go through exactly what we went through 60 years ago.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not entirely agree with my hon. Friend's comparison. When there is a conflict, whether it be the conflict in Bosnia or the Spanish civil war in the 1930s, for example, it is incredibly difficult for the international community to make a meaningful contribution towards ending it. The difference since the second world war is that, when a sovereign country is invaded by a foreign power, the United Nations, as we saw in the Gulf, is remarkably more successful than the League of Nations in the previous period. My hon. Friend has to take that fact into account when making historical comparisons.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Although many people may not agree with the solutions proposed by

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

Baroness Thatcher, I believe that she struck a chord when she expressed her sentiments about the horror of ethnic cleansing and the systematic rape and driving of women and children from their homes. The Secretary of State has been reluctant to contemplate limited air strikes against Bosnian Serbs in Serbia, but he has been careful not to rule them out completely. In what circumstances can he foresee limited air strikes being used?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already said that the use of air power in certain circumstances can be relevant, and that we are using it at the moment to enforce the no-fly zone. As to the hon. Gentleman's question whether air power could be used in some other way, that is not in itself an ethical question. It is a question whether, in the circumstances proposed, it would produce the benefit that has been identified by those who advocate it.

Our judgment is that that would not be the case, having regard to the proposals currently being made. It would not only destroy the humanitarian effort of the United Nations but would transform the United Nation's role. That, it seems to us, would not be in accordance with the objectives we seek.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is just over a year since Her Majesty's Government, in common with many other Governments, recognised Bosnia as an independent sovereign state; that during that year 2 million or more people have been displaced; that well over 100,000 people have been killed; that the killing still goes on; and that there is continued evidence of Serbian involvement, from Serbia itself, in these atrocities? Does my right hon. and learned Friend also accept that, today, the Bosnian Government are ethnically mixed, and that, whatever their shortcomings, they are far more democratic than the Government of that other nation, Kuwait, to whose aid we rightly went?

Mr. Rifkind: Although my hon. Friend is correct when he says that Bosnia is an independent state which has been recognised by the international community, the fact is that those who are involved in the combat within Bosnia are themselves Bosnian citizens—Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims—and that they are all involved in this carnage against one another. Until my hon. Friend comes to terms with that fact, it is not possible to think of this as simply an international war of the kind that he has occasionally sought to portray.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): In the discussions that I had with Dr. Karadzic at the end of last year, he claimed that he had made an offer to the United Nations to provide it with the facility to have monitors at every command post of the Bosnian Serb army and at every Bosnian Serb airfield. Why has that offer not been taken up? That would be less precarious and risky for our 2,800 troops who are there now than their present position. That facility could have determined precisely who pulled the trigger first and fired shells at Srebrenica. Why do we not take up Dr. Karadzic's offer and put United Nations monitors in place?

Mr. Rifkind: As I recollect it, Dr. Karadzic made that proposal as a way of avoiding an enforcement resolution for the no-fly zone proposals. Since then, for the first time, Dr. Karadzic's supporters—the Bosnian Serbs—have introduced Bosnian Serb combat aircraft over the Bosnian skies. That is why it was necessary for the Security Council to pass the enforcement resolution, which is now being implemented by NATO on the United Nations' behalf.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the quickest available short cut to a general Balkan war and an escalation of the conflict far beyond the borders of Yugoslavia would be to bomb Serbian positions? Will he therefore treat the recent comments of Baroness Thatcher with the contempt that they deserve?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly important that we do all within our power to prevent the internationalisation of the crisis in Bosnia. That must be an objective in the interests of the whole world. I believe that bombing Serbia would exacerbate the situation in a way that would be unlikely to bring peace to that part of the world any earlier.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State realise how widespread the disappointment will be throughout the country that he has again used this opportunity to nail his colours so firmly to the fence? How many more millions of people must be driven from their homes and tens of thousands of people killed before the Government propose a policy commensurate with the genocide that we are witnessing?

Mr. Rifkind: I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman, and I was waiting to hear which policy he would propose. He knows that, sadly, there are many such wars going on around the world at the present time—in Angola, in Cambodia and in Azerbaijan—as well as in Bosnia.

Mr. Field: This is in Europe.

Mr. Rifkind: I am not aware of any ethical distinction between a war in Bosnia and a war in Angola or Cambodia. If the hon. Gentleman is appealing to the Government on moral grounds, it is a curious moral distinction that is prepared to tolerate conflict in other parts of the world but not in Bosnia. Unless he has specific proposals that have not already been considered, I ask him to realise that the options that are being advanced by some of his hon. Friends are not, in our judgment, likely to produce the results that he and Conservative Members would like to see.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there will be widespread support for taking care not to risk the lives of British service men? Does he further accept that, throughout the country and across party divides, there is growing concern about the dilemma of where we are going and how we shall deal with this appalling problem? On the one hand we appear to be refusing to allow Bosnian Muslims to be adequately armed, but on the other hand the United Nations, by not using force, is denying those Muslims the right to defence. While their territory is continually being reduced, more and more of them are being slaughtered.

Is there no point at which the Government and the United Nations will say that enough is enough? We must say that or get out completely, because the ultimate result of the war will be many more thousands killed. The British people understand the Government's point of view but are a little ashamed that we have not been able to do enough to save the lives of many innocent people.

Mr. Rifkind: We would all be anxious to do more if proposals were identified that would help to achieve the aims that my hon. Friend and I, and all other hon. Members, share. My hon. Friend says that we should tell the Bosnian Serbs, "Enough is enough," or that we should pull out from Bosnia entirely. In practice, that would mean pulling out the 2,500 British forces who have taken thousands of tonnes of aid to rescue many Bosnians, from all communities, from the starvation that they would have faced over the winter months.

In recent weeks, we have seen how United Nations forces have been helping refugees by taking people to safe places away from the war zone. It may not be the most heroic policy and may not resolve the overall problems in Bosnia, but to say that, because we cannot achieve all we would like, we must resign ourselves to doing nothing, is a counsel of despair, and not one that would commend itself to the House or the country.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does the Secretary of State recognise that there has been a shift of opinion, certainly across the country and in the House in recent months? I was among those who argued six or eight months ago against any form of military intervention. However, in view of the continued slaughter of innocent Bosnian civilians, is it not clear that far greater pressure must be placed on the Serbian leadership and military commanders? To a certain extent, one can draw an analogy with the ruler of Baghdad.

Is it not the case that the Serbs continue their aggression, war crimes and atrocities because they know that no force will be used to stop them? Whether Lady Thatcher is right or wrong, are we to be appeasers in the face of some of the worst crimes in Europe since the end of the second world war?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to draw parallels with the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein and the occupation of Kuwait, he should reflect on the fact that Kuwait and the Iraqi forces in Kuwait were subject to the largest strikes of air power for a sustained period of weeks, if not months, that the world had ever known, but that those strikes did not achieve the desired effect. They did not lead to the withdrawal of a single Iraqi soldier from the Gulf. It was only when a massive international coalition army went in on the ground that we achieved the liberation of Kuwait. Therefore, people who argue for selective air strikes must ponder whether that is likely to achieve the result that they have in mind.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Although I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his measured response to those who want further military involvement, what evidence does he have that the no-fly zone, fully implemented, will have any effect on ground fighting in the area? Is there not a danger that the escalation of the involvement of NATO and others could encourage those who believe that, if they make enough noise, more support will be given and that we will be drawn in gradually, which could be dangerous in the future?

Mr. Rifkind: The purpose of the no-fly zone is to ensure that the United Nations resolution of some months ago, banning the use of Bosnian aircraft by any of the fighting parties, should be implemented. We had considerable doubts and reservations about the wisdom or necessity of a no-fly zone enforcement resolution but those concerns became irrelevant when some weeks ago the Bosnian Serbs for the first time decided to reintroduce combat aircraft into Bosnia. Once they had done that, it became inevitable and necessary for the United Nations to enforce its own resolution. That is what the NATO operation, at the behest of the United Nations, is doing at the moment.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): What representations are being made to the Russian Government at the moment to ensure that they change their attitude to the enforcement of sanctions in the next two weeks? What action is being taken within the European Community to stop the flouting of sanctions via the Danube, which has been going on for months? Why has it taken so long for air exclusion zones to be imposed when they were being talked about several months ago? Why is it only now that people are talking about truly enforcing sanctions, when we knew last summer that they were being broken?

Mr. Rifkind: The increase in sanctions currently being considered by the Security Council includes the stricter monitoring of the Danube. My right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is of course making strong representations to his Russian colleagues. I remind the hon. Gentleman what I told the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark): the current resolution allows for a 15-day period before any new Security Council sanction enforcement measures would apply but, if there is any delay because of the Russians, it may not be necessary to have that 15-day period after the passing of the resolution. Therefore, there may be no time lost as a result of the current Russian position.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will acknowledge that none the less there is widespread anger in the community when we watch the reports that most of us saw yesterday. Does he accept, however, that he stands at the Dispatch Box not to express emotion and anger but to exercise his realistic judgment, and that the reasoned stand that he has taken today has the full support of the House? Will he please explain to the House the effect of deploying air power alone, as opposed to the use of air power with massive ground troop reinforcement, which some have urged—some of us believe unrealistically—on the nation?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. Of course, there can be circumstances in which air power by itself can achieve a desired result—for instance, if there is a particular target that can be identified, taken out from the air and eliminated. But in general, the use of air power as we have seen it exercised over the years has been to soften up a target that can then de dealt with by forces on the ground.

I know that my hon. Friend shares my view that, in the context of the terrain with which the Royal Air Force and other air forces would have to deal in Bosnia, it is difficult to believe that targets, including mobile artillery in heavily forested country, could easily be picked out and eliminated by the selective use of air power. At the end of the day, unless ground forces are also used, it is difficult to believe that such an operation could have more than a limited effect.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Does the Secretary of State accept that considerable unhappiness has been expressed on both sides of the House about

[Mr. John Gunnell]

policies which will in effect give comfort to the Serbs when they listen to, or hear about, our discussion? We have ruled out certain action, and that decision has had support, but we have been given no suggestion of extra action. It is clear that, for the very reasons with which the Secretary of State started his statement, our present policies are ineffective. He referred to yesterday's shelling and——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a question.

Mr. Gunnell: I am coming to the question, Madam Speaker.

As extra pressure has been mentioned, what extra pressure can in practice be brought to bear on the Serbs? It is imperative that, when they are redoubling their efforts to take more land, we adopt practical measures to curb them—*[Interruption.]* I should like the Secretary of State to say——

Madam Speaker: Order. I call the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, in the past week the United Nations has for the first time taken effective measures to prevent the use of air space by Bosnian Serbian combat aircraft. In the Security Council, we are currently discussing a substantial tightening of the economic sanctions that have already devastated the Serbian economy. No doubt other measures, which we hope will contribute to the result that we all wish to see achieved, will be considered.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: We are now moving to the second statement. I had hoped to call more hon. Members to question the Secretary of State, and would have been able to do so if Members had put direct questions and not made such long statements.

Competition

4.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Neil Hamilton): With permission, I should like to make a statement about strengthening the law to curb anti-competitive practices in the marketplace.

Last November my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced to the House the publication of a Green Paper on "Abuse of Market Power" which outlined three possible options for strengthening the law. Those options were to strengthen the existing legislation, to replace it with a prohibition, or to run the two systems in parallel.

We received 143 responses to the Green Paper. Copies of a summary of them have been placed in the Vote Office. There was no consensus amongst those who responded on which of the options represented the best way forward. Each of the options received roughly equal support. This contrasts with the overwhelming support for introducing a prohibition on restrictive trade practices. I can assure the House that the Government remain committed to introducing such a prohibition when legislative time permits.

Having carefully considered the arguments advanced for and against each of the options, the Government have decided that the best choice is to strengthen the existing system. With this strengthened regime we can retain the current wide scope and flexibility of powers without increasing the regulatory burden on firms.

It is proposed to strengthen the current legislation in four ways: stronger powers of investigation; additional scope for enforceable undertakings; provision of interim orders to suspend anti-competitive practices; and some coverage of property rights. Stronger investigative powers for the Director General of Fair Trading should enable him to establish more quickly whether there should be a full-scale investigation.

The director general currently has discretion to accept enforceable undertakings in lieu of a Competition Act reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is proposed to extend this ability to enable him to accept such undertakings, subject to suitable safeguards, before his formal investigation under the Competition Act, and in lieu of a monopoly reference under the Fair Trading Act 1973. Breaches of these undertakings would be enforceable in the courts. This proposal received considerable support from respondents.

The Green Paper suggested that companies might be made liable for penalties and damages from the point at which an MMC reference was made if they continued with a practice that was subsequently found to be against the public interest. A number of respondents argued that would be unjust and that it might lead a company to abandon a practice that was later found not to be against the public interest. That argument is accepted. But there can be cases in which immediate action is necessary. We therefore intend to take up the suggestion made by some respondents that we should be able to make interim orders under the Competition Act. These would prohibit specified activities by a firm if there was good reason to believe that a competitor, customer or supplier ran the risk of suffering serious damage during the period of the MMC's investigation.

The Green Paper considered the very limited scope of both the Fair Trading Act and the Competition Act to deal with competition problems concerning property rights. Fundamental change is not proposed in this area, but it is important to be able to deal with some limited situations in which specific property rights—for example, rights of access—are exercised in a way that damages competition. We shall hold further discussions with interested parties to resolve how best to deal with those problems.

As regards the other options in the Green Paper, the Government are not convinced that a compelling case for repealing the current legislation and replacing it with a prohibition on abuse of market power has been made. Nor are we convinced that such a prohibition should be added on top of the existing monopoly controls.

It is clear from the consultation that a prohibition would increase the regulatory burden on companies and introduce uncertainty for business. Despite experience of EC law, the identificatiiton of abuses of market power in many cases remains a matter of fine judgment. It can be very difficult to assess in advance what will be regarded as anti-competitive and what as acceptable business behaviour. That inherent uncertainty, coupled with the possibility of fines and private actions, could run the risk of inhibiting rather than promoting competition. In contrast, restrictive agreements can be more readily defined and prohibited, as set out in the 1989 White Paper.

When my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade introduced the Green Paper to the House last November, a number of hon. Members raised particular areas of concern, such as relations between the high street banks and business customers. In addition, a number of the Green Paper responses that supported a prohibition implied that this support was conditional on the prohibition being able to deal with alleged unfair practices in their particular markets. One of the tests we applied when considering the various options was the extent to which they would be able to meet those concerns. The conclusion is that a prohibition would bite on fewer market situations than our present legislation does. That is especially true in markets in which there is more than one major player.

The changes I have outlined today will enable us to build on the strengths of the existing legislation. I commend them to the House as they will provide the benefits of vigorous competition without stifling wealth creation. It is intended to include the changes in legislation to introduce the prohibition on restrictive trade practices.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Does the Minister understand that consumers will be disappointed that the Government have accepted the most timid of the three options set out in the Green Paper? Can he explain, for instance, why the Government have rejected the advice of the Consumers Association, which favoured clear prohibitions and substantial penalties for breaching them, and full rights for third-party redress?

Why have the Government failed to deal with the shortcomings in the existing legislation, which the President of the Board of Trade himself identified in his November statement? Why, for example, are there no penalties for past misconduct—a weakness which the President of the Board of Trade referred to in that statement?

In what ways will the Minister's statement help small businesses that complain about the abuse of market power by the high street banks? Is it not true that not a single small business will be helped by the Minister's statement today? Is it not the case that, after five months, we have again had words from the Minister but no action to help small businesses?

Would the Minister's statement in any way have changed the refusal by the President of the Board of Trade to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the hostile bid by Airtours for Owners Abroad? Will the Government be under any obligation after today's statement to accept the advice of the Office of Fair Trading? Why give additional powers of investigation when there is no need for the Government to accept the recommendations of the Office of Fair Trading or the Director General of Fair Trading?

Not once in his statement did the Minister refer to the interests or wishes of consumers. In adopting the option that has been announced, the Government can be accused of putting vested interests before the interests of consumers. This Government do not represent consumers' interests.

Mr. Hamilton: As a representative of a party that cannot even change its constitution, clause 4 of which advocates statutory monopolies throughout the country, the hon. Gentleman makes an unconvincing proponent of competition.

Let me answer the questions that the hon. Gentleman has put to me. In deciding which of the three options to adopt—principally, of course, in consumers' interests—we had to consider what would ultimately be likely to benefit consumers. We concluded that to introduce an unnecessarily complex, burdensome and bureaucratic system which, in certain circumstances, might stifle rather than enhance competition would not ultimately be to the benefit of consumers.

We decided instead to build upon the strength of the existing system—which, in my opinion, has been very effective over the years in defending the interests of consumers—and to plug certain gaps and close certain loopholes in that system. That is precisely what we have done: we have opted for certainty and flexibility; for the least burdensome option; and to build upon a system that is regarded as largely effective.

The Consumers Association principally wanted to ensure that we introduced a system that was certain and simple to understand. The option that the association selected—option 3—would have been the most complex and confusing of the various options. That is why we decided against it.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the practices, which have been widely criticised, adopted by the banks. We are dealing here with the abuse of market power—in particular, in circumstances where one company has a large share of the market and abuses the power that that large share gives it. That is not the case with banks, which are already covered by the existing competition legislation.

Under the Fair Trading Act, a complex monopoly occurs where companies together act in a way that is contrary to the interests of consumers or against the public interest, in circumstances where those companies together have more than 25 per cent. of the market. It is perfectly open to anyone aggrieved by the practice adopted by the banks at present to make a complaint to the Office of Fair

[Mr. Hamilton]

Trading, which can consider the matter. If the complaint appears to have substance, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission can be brought into play.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Airtours bid. I cannot in any way speculate as to what the outcome of any application might have been if the law had been different. What I can say is that the President of the Board of Trade decided in the circumstances of the case—which was widely regarded as being a matter for fine judgment—that there was no case for investigation. The curious outcome —at which the hon. Gentleman may be rather surprised —is that the market, having been allowed to work in those circumstances, has reduced the level of uncertainty for the company that did not wish to be bid for. Hence the most speedy outcome has been determined as a consequence of the President's decision.

Mr. Dennis Skinner: (Bolsover): Come on.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is complaining about the fact that I am treating the comments of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) seriously. I know that the hon. Member for Bolsover does not treat his Opposition Front-Bench colleagues seriously, but I, at least, am paying them that compliment.

The official Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central, asked whether we should have changed the legislation to make it a requirement that Ministers should accept the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. There would be no point in giving Ministers advice if they were obliged to accept it as it would not then be advice. The hon. Gentleman is asking us to remove his opportunity to hold Ministers accountable for the decisions of competition authorities. I do not know whether everyone would agree with that.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): While I welcome the extension of investigatory powers under fair trading and competition legislation, does my hon. Friend the Minister accept that what he has announced this afternoon will be no consolation to the customers of high street banks who believe that they have been bilked by banks over the past two years? Does he also accept that his announcement will be no consolation to water ratepayers, particularly those in the south-west who will be paying increased charges of more than 16 per cent. this year? Frankly, water ratepayers have no confidence in the regulatory authorities or in Ofwat. Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to give them some words of comfort?

Mr. Hamilton: All I can say to my hon. Friend is what I said to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central a moment ago. With regard to the banks, our current competition legislation is apt to cover the kinds of circumstances about which my hon. Friend complains. If the Director General of Fair Trading formed the view that certain practices were contrary to the public interest, he could make a recommendation that the matter should be investigated by the MMC. So far, he has chosen not to do that.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, the water industry, like all the privatised utilities, is subject to a significant degree of regulation in the interests of consumers. The Director General of Water Services has power to consider all matters that might adversely affect the interests of consumers and to take the necessary action accordingly. Once again, it is not for me to second-guess the decisions of the Director General of Water Services. However, it is open to anyone who is aggrieved to take a case to the director general and make the argument for it.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): The elegant but labyrinthine language of the Minister's statement has left many of us and some consumer groups puzzled. Why will the weakest of the three options stop some of the inexcusable bullying by large companies of smaller emerging companies? Why have the Government not taken the second or third option in the Green Paper—for a prohibition regime of a type which works extremely well in numerous other countries and which is the norm in the rest of the European Community?

Mr. Hamilton: I am afraid that the hon. and learned Gentleman's hearing aid must be defective. I have already answered that question twice. We have chosen the option that is likely to be the least burdensome and least costly and to build upon the effectiveness of the existing system.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Can my hon. Friend assure me that the way in which his proposals will impact on small and medium-sized businesses will not increase bureaucracy, paperwork and regulation and that small and medium-sized businesses have something to look forward to under the proposals?

Mr. Hamilton: I think that I can confirm what my hon. Friend has asked. As Minister responsible for the deregulation initiative, I had very much in mind the impact of costs upon businesses. We must consider the proportionality of what we do in the House by way of imposing legislative burdens. For very small improvements in consumer benefits, we might impose significant costs on companies which, ultimately, have to be borne by consumers as well.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): As the Minister has taken a fairly soft option, and as we are all aware that where there is no competition, such as in the nationalised industries which have now become private monopolies, we rely on the regulator, which, in my view, is little better than a panacea to keep the public happy, what is the position if we have a regulator like Professor Littlechild, who has brought the art of slothfulness almost to the point of atrophy and has led to the destruction of the coal industry? Will the legislation do anything to prevent such a dreadful recurrence, as we have seen in this incident?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has an impressive command of polysyllables but a rather less sure grasp of the legislation which governs privatised utilities. I doubt whether the privatised utilities would share his opinion that the director generals who are responsible for their operations are weak or ineffective. I am fairly certain that British Gas does not take that view.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Does my hon. Friend agree that small businesses, especially sole traders, often feel that they are penalised by larger companies? I appreciate and welcome my hon. Friend's statement today. Will he ensure that large companies which are found guilty under the new proposals are required by statute to publish in their annual reports where they have been found wanting?

Mr. Hamilton: That is an interesting suggestion which I have not heard from anyone else. As the Minister responsible for company law, I shall give consideration to it.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister must think that we have dropped off a Christmas tree if he thinks that we believe all the mumbo-jumbo which he has trotted out today, especially when we consider fair trading against the background of petrol stations rigging their prices and banks ripping off customers. Prices are rigged in the Common Market, lawyers fix their fees to extortionate heights and nuclear power is subsidised by £1·3 billion to the detriment of coal—and the Minister asks us to believe that he is talking about fair trading. Take it back and chuck it in the dustbin.

Mr. Hamilton: I do not know which specific ornament the hon. Gentleman would be on the Christmas tree. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) suggests that the hon. Gentleman would be the fairy at the top. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's weighty opinion in this area, as in all others, will be treated by the House with the degree of importance which it deserves.

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): Does my hon. Friend accept that the fact that little evidence has been produced of a significant abuse of market power by private sector companies which are not already subject to the oversight of a specific regulator suggests that the present system is generally working well? Is there not a risk that a more significant amendment to the law, such as that involved in options 2 and 3, would add to the bureaucratic burden on firms to little benefit?

Mr. Hamilton: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Many of the complaints of small businesses in particular relate more to inequality of bargaining power rather than to an abuse of a dominant position. That is a much more difficult question to deal with, and it is not one which was addressed by the Green Paper.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Can the Minister tell us whether the policy announced today will have any effect on the beam in the Government's eye? I am sure that he is aware that many firms absolutely depend on contracts from the Ministry of Defence. Does he realise that such contracts are placed through a division of the Property Services Agency, which is forcing firms to forgo their right to payment within 30 days and requiring them to accept that they will be paid only when the Property Services Agency has been paid by the Ministry of Defence? That is an abuse of market power which conflicts with what the Chancellor promised in the 1922 Budget and in which Ministers are conspiring.

Mr. Hamilton: It would have been less of a problem if there had been a Labour Government because there would have been fewer defence contracts for small suppliers. A Labour Government would have made swingeing reductions in defence expenditure, despite the crocodile tears which Labour Members now shed at the outcome of "Options for Change".

With regard to the specific question about late payment, the Government are committed to paying their bills in due time, and that goes for their main contractors as well. We hope that main contractors will impose the same terms on sub-contractors because we take seriously the question of late payment of debt.

A number of other measures have been proposed recently. As the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) knows, we have a consultation paper outstanding on whether we should have some sort of statement or audit of the payment practices of companies published in annual reports and accounts. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will give us the benefit of his views on that matter.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the private monopolies that have come out of the public utilities will be subject to the terms of the statement? Is he aware that the charges of South West Water amount now to an additional 18 per cent.? That is the result of the National Rivers Authority—the regulatory authority—demanding higher and higher standards faster and faster. I found my hon. Friend's statement helpful, but does he agree that the private monopoly—in this instance, South West Water—is abusing its power? It has no choice, but it is costing Devon and Cornwall water charge payers an arm and a leg.

Mr. Hamilton: The principal reason for water charges having to rise by more than the rate of inflation is that the Labour Government cut substantially water authorities' capital programmes. I note that my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside is on the Government Front Bench. I am sure that he would confirm that we are now having to catch up, in effect, because of the Labour Government's failures during the 1970s.

I do not know the details of South West Water's charges. I am sure, however, that my hon. Friend the Minister of State heard what my hon. Friend said.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Minister's statement give any comfort to those in the pharmaceutical industry who have been concerned about the practice of one of the major manufacturers?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman's question is rather cryptic. I am not aware——

Rev. Martin Smyth: I have written to the Minister about the matter.

Mr. Hamilton: I understand. His question takes up the case that he has set out in correspondence with me. The proposals that are set out in the Green Paper are not designed—*[Interruption.]* As the hon. Gentleman did not identify the case, I was not certain whether he was referring to the one that I now fully recollect.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Minister written to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth)?

Mr. Hamilton: I have done more than that: I have discussed the matter with the hon. Member for Belfast, South.

The case which the hon. Gentleman raised with me in correspondence is not apt to be considered in the circumstances that are set out in the Green Paper, which concern the abuse of a dominant position, especially when one producer has a position in the market which enables him to oppress the smaller operators within it.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I add my welcome for my hon. Friend's excellent statement. Will he confirm that the option that he has chosen will not cause a rash of third party actions, which would be expensive for industry and commerce, would slow down the decision-making process and would not necessarily add anything to the existing excellent regime for competition?

Mr. Hamilton: I can confirm that. As a lawyer, albeit one who has retired into public life, I am rather surprised by the stance taken by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). As I understand it, he believes that there should be a right of private actions. That would lead to a bonanza for lawyers and would impose significant costs on companies. Ultimately it would not be in the interests of consumers.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As one who went with the Amalgamated Engineering Union and its lawyers before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission as a witness in the case of the Atlas steel foundry, I was impressed by its method of operation. However, in factory situations of a sort that might arise in any constituency, there is a need to be a bit quicker. Events in factories overtake the MMC whatever it wanted to do in the first place.

I asked the Minister a question that arises from paragraph 13 of the Department of Trade and Industry's paper on intellectual property rights, which states:

"intellectual property rights were adequately dealt with in existing legislation. 4 of these"—

the respondents—

"favoured intellectual property rights being covered by a general prohibition, with three saying that the role of the Copyright Tribunal would then need to be reviewed."

Does the Minister agree with those respondents? Does he think that there should be a review and extension of the work of the crucially important Copyright Tribunal?

Mr. Hamilton: That is a matter for my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I shall draw my hon. Friend's attention to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Bearing in mind the fact that virtually the only monopolies operating in Britain in recent history were those set up and sanctioned in the public sectors by Labour Governments, that the Labour party has consistently opposed every attempt to introduce competition, ranging from trying to prevent consumers even from having a choice of telephone to proposing any competition on the domestic routes of British Airways, that nothing is more certain than that the Labour party will support vested interests, as it did recently when we were dealing with the coal industry, does my hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members have a cheek to pose in the Chamber as the champions of consumers?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, they have, but it comes as no surprise.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is it not heart-warming to see so many converts on the Tory Benches this afternoon—Tory Members who are now against the privatisation of the water industry, a measure for which they all voted? They are now complaining about the extortionate prices, salaries and dividends that are now being charged, drawn and distributed.

Is it not right that the Minister has taken the soft option, recognising in passing that some regulation is necessary, that capitalism and free markets do not work by themselves and that the Government must intervene—but not too far, as that would expose the nasty, villainous tactics that many big businesses pursue?

Why do the Government have these double standards? There are no soft options for those who are on income support or for those on the lowest of incomes. For those people there are comprehensive regulations and criminal penalties. Why cannot there be the same approach to big businesses? Is the answer that big businesses know very well that, if they make plenty of large donations to the Tory party, they can get away with whatever they want?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman performs a most valuable function by reminding us what the Labour party is really like.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): To wrap this up, I am delighted that my hon. Friend has opted for certainty. I do not think that I am alone, however, in saying that I am rather uncertain about what that certainty is. I am not sure what the targets are at which he is aiming. It might be helpful if he would explain to me in what sector I should sell shares—if I had any, which I have not—and, if I intended to invest, which I do not, what shares I should buy.

Mr. Hamilton: I have many functions to perform as an Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry. Fortunately, financial services, which used to be my responsibility, have gone to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. I shall direct my hon. Friend's question to him. I am sure that his advice would be better than mine, in any event.

Points of Order

4.47 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I wish to raise with you, Madam Speaker, on a point of order, a matter which I submit affects the rights and privileges of the House.

I wrote in October 1992 to the Secretary of State for Social Security about a case that concerned a disabled child in my constituency. The right hon. Gentleman replied to me more than two months later, saying that the case was being dealt with. I wrote to him again in February because, after more than four months, the case had not been dealt with and settled. As he did not reply, I tabled a question for answer on 1 April in which I asked him when he intended to reply to my letter. There was a response from the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People. The Minister stated that he understood that I had

"already received from the Benefits Agency a reply both to my earlier letter and to my question."

I had not received that reply, but a little later I did receive it. The letter came from a person called Ann Robinson, director of policy and planning. It began extremely ungrammatically by saying

"As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions on relevant operational matters."

The letter continues:

"However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question."

A non-Member was writing that she was replying to a question that I had tabled to a Minister and to which the Minister had not replied.

I submit, Madam Speaker, that when hon. Members table questions to Ministers, they have a right to expect answers from Ministers. Furthermore, it is not open to someone who is not a Member to purport to reply to a question from a Member by saying:

"I am replying . . . to your recent Parliamentary Question."

Ann Robinson ended her letter:

"I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1993; Vol. 222, c. *421*.]

Here is a non-Member saying, purporting, claiming, that she can arrange for a reply to be published in the *Official Report* and for a copy to be placed in the Library when she herself has no right to enter the Library of the House of Commons.

The matter affects the right of every Member of Parliament to table a question to a Minister and to receive a Minister's reply. Also, someone who is not a Member of Parliament must not be permitted to state that she is replying to a parliamentary question or that she is arranging for a reply to appear in the *Official Report* and to be placed in the Library.

The matter is for the House. It is a question not of my dispute with a Minister over policy or individual cases, but of whether Members of Parliament who table questions have the undeniable right to obtain answers from Ministers and of ensuring that those outside the House are not permitted to usurp the rights of the House of Commons.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I am also concerned about Ministers having all the power and the glory and no responsibility. As for writing to a Minister for information and being referred to a chief executive, you, Madam Speaker, rightly said that you are not responsible for what is said by a Minister in the House. However, could you rule on whether a Secretary of State or other Minister would be responsible for anything said by chief executives of all the quangos that the Government have created?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I intend to answer those two points of order, and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) may be satisfied when he hears my response.

I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for giving me notice of his point of order, on an issue about which the right hon. Gentleman has previously expressed concern. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that Ministers remain fully accountable for the work of their Departments, including that of executive agencies. It is for the Minister concerned to decide whether or not to refer a question to the chief executive of an agency for a detailed answer.

Since last October, following a recommendation from the Administration Committee, such answers have been printed in the *Official Report*. The Benefits Agency operates in exactly the same way as other agencies. Right hon. and hon. Members are able to table questions about its work and to seek an Adjournment debate on particular issues—as did the right hon. Member for Gorton just before Easter. However, I will look further into the matter.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further points of order. I gave a ruling and said that I would look further into the matter. We ought to leave it at that, unless the hon. Gentleman has a point of order on a different matter.

Mr. Cryer: It is, Madam Speaker. As you know, the Government are extending the system whereby chief executives reply to questions about the prison service. I ask you to consider whether it should be necessary for the House—not the Government—to agree to any extension by means, for example, of an affirmative resolution. Then at least the decision to extend that power would be in the hands of the House, not the Executive.

Madam Speaker: I have already made a statement, and I told the right hon. Gentleman that I was taking the matter no further at this stage.

BILL PRESENTED

Welfare of Animals at Markets

Sir Richard Body presented a Bill to prohibit the sale of lambs of under twenty eight days of age at auction markets: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 23 April, and to be printed. [Bill 177.]

Coastal Waters (Water Quality Standards) (Costs)

4.53 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the costs of maintaining and improving water quality in coastal waters to be a collective charge on sewerage undertakings; to establish a scheme for determining such costs and their allocation between undertakings; and for connected purposes.

There is in progress in the United Kingdom the greatest clean-up of our coastal water ever undertaken, and it arises directly from the many years of neglect which went before. Change finally comes about because of the EC bathing waters directive, which requires 455 of the United Kingdom's beaches to be brought up to standard, and 130 of them lie in the area of South West Water—a larger number than in any other water company area. It means that 32 per cent. of all the beaches in the United Kingdom covered by the directive are to be found in the south-west.

That those beaches are brought up to standard should be cause for national celebration, but for the people of Teignbridge and the south-west such celebration has become a regional nightmare. What should clearly be a national responsibility is being funded on a local basis. The cost of cleaning up one third of the nation's beaches is being met by just 1·5 million people—or more exactly, the 650,000 paying customers who already receive bills which are on average 35 per cent. higher than in the rest of Britain and which are due to go far higher still.

It will not stop there. We can expect ever-increasing demands to upgrade our water still further. Standards which may be acceptable now will not be acceptable in the 21st century. If we do not rectify the cost mechanism now, the situation will get progressively worse.

The typical south-west domestic household charge of £230 per year will reach £400 at the end of the decade. For many people in an area of relatively high rateable values, those charges can go higher still. Operation Cleansweep is set to cost £2 billion over the next 10 years—expenditure of something like £4 million per week. To fund that, Ofwat has allowed an increase for the current year of inflation plus a staggering 11·5 per cent. The effect of that formula is that bills have risen more than 40 per cent. in just three years.

Let us consider those who have to shoulder those bills in practice. The south-west has a high proportion of elderly, retired people. Just under 26 per cent. of Teignbridge's population are of retirement age, and a great many other people are on the threshold of retirement. Those people have, for the most part, worked hard all their working lives and are now slightly above the income support rate. They are not in the business of asking for state handouts. Their generation and that of their parents have served this country well, yet they see their income slashed by the fall in interest rates. They recoil in horror at the prospect of value added tax on their heating costs. Now, in the autumn of their years, they are faced with costs that they cannot control on the one ingredient that they cannot live without. One can economise on most things. One may be able to make savings on gas and electricity, but for the vast majority of people, savings in water consumption which lead to a reduction in costs are literally impossible.

Let there be no doubt that the south-west is unique. It has the highest charges in the country. The Anglian authority—the next highest—has an average charge of £227·5p as opposed to £227·84p, but when one considers the proportion of that which is the sewerage charge, the south-west has the highest charge, at £134·58p as opposed to £120·97 for the next highest charger, Anglian Water. Anglia also has a very different age profile from the south-west. In terms also of average gross weekly earnings, Anglia has within it some of the country's wealthiest counties. By contrast, Devon and Cornwall together are, by that measure, the poorest region of all. By comparison, a largely inland authority such as Thames Water produces a total bill of £138·78, of which the sewerage charge amounts to just £69·39.

The cost of cleaning up the nation's coast should be met on a national basis. No one suggests that the cost of maintaining the Royal Navy should be met on a local basis. It is funded nationally. My Bill would do the same for water by providing for the sewerage element to be equalised across all water authorities.

In so doing, my Bill hardly breaks new ground. As long ago as 1638, John Hampden challenged his obligation to pay taxes to protect the coasts from the attentions of Barbary corsairs. One ground for his challenge was that he lived in an inland area. He failed at that time and he deserved to fail. In proposing this mechanism for what threatens our coast today, I am hardly breaking new ground. I am relying on a British sense of fairness.

What objections could there be to my suggestion? Is it sufficient to say that since local people benefit, local people must pay? Can we just glibly remark that because it is good for tourism, it must be good for the local people? Tell that to the many hundreds of people who have written to me about this. Better still, tell it to a 70-year-old widow who receives a retirement pension increase of £10·64 per month to meet increases in council tax and water charges of £11·71. She is not topping up her swimming pool with new squeaky clean water or spending her leisure hours wind-surfing her way around the south-west. It would be stupefyingly complacent merely to reply that water industry investment to raise environmental standards means that charges must rise in real terms, and to suggest that that statement should be the end of the argument.

There will inevitably be those who say that the situation shows that privatisation was wrong all along. In fact, it shows no such thing. Failure to invest in water quality and to face up to the massive pollution that civilisation generates goes back a full hundred years and beyond. Privatisation has enabled massive sums to be invested and it is clearly in the nation's interest that its coastal waters should be as clean as possible. But any policy needs to be adjusted in the light of changing circumstances. Who could honestly have predicted the sudden and immediate demands that the EC bathing water directive would make on us?

Even if it is not the Government's fault that we are in this predicament, only the Government can ultimately deliver a solution. Far from just complaining and whingeing, I have suggested a solution. I have even done so without proposing an increase in taxation and a massive Exchequer grant. The Bill addresses an injustice which becomes more obvious with every day that passes. It is a situation which, in common fairness, cannot be allowed to stand.

I have with me today a number of my west country colleagues who support me in my endeavour and I have presented the Bill and the case for it with all the force that I can command. I commend it to the House.

5.1 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I oppose the Bill. No hon. Members in their right minds think other than that coastal pollution is an extremely important subject for Britain. If fair and effective measures were brought forward under a ten-minute Bill or any other procedure to do something about coastal pollution, I and others like me would not oppose them.

We listened extremely carefully to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), but what we heard was political posturing of the worst kind. He said that the problem concerned the west country. People are entitled to special pleading, but it would come better from someone who had not, throughout, voted for water privatisation.

The truth of the matter is that, when the water industry was regarded as a public utility, it was in a far better position to do something about such problems. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it was. The hon. Gentleman talked about fuel bills, but who was it in their Budget who extended VAT to fuel, and who voted for it?

This is a classic case of Members happily going through the Government lobby and then whingeing when the consequences of their actions catch up with them. Those who vote in a particular way should be prepared to face the consequences of their actions. This is an attempt by the hon. Gentleman, surrounded by a phalanx of his hon. Friends from the west country, to persuade people in the west country that they are trying to do something about the problem when in fact the fault originated with the Government whom they so loyally supported. This is the worst kind of posturing, trying to have one's cake and eat it.

A sensible Bill on coastal pollution would have made some reference to the Braer disaster off Shetland. There would have been some reference to those tankers going through the Minch and other protected waters, about which nothing has been done. The Home Secretary is said to be an effective Minister, but he has not persuaded the Cabinet to stop those foreign tankers going through the Minch and off Shetland. If this had been a worthy measure, attention would have been paid to that.

No attention has been paid to the real problems of the benthic community—the creatures who live at the bottom of the seas and are affected by disasters such as the Braer. The Bill is not about coastal pollution, but about short-term political advantage, and should therefore be opposed.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 39, Noes 65.

Division No. 230] **[5.05 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Budgen, Nicholas
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Jenkin, Bernard
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Robathan, Andrew
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Streeter, Gary
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Wilkinson, John

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Angela Browning and
Sir John Hannam.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Corbett, Robin
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Garrett, John
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hinchliffe, David
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Simpson, Alan
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

5.16 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I hope that this Criminal Justice Bill may arouse a little less controversy than the measure on which the House has just divided. It covers a comparatively narrow range of issues—but they are important, and I hope that, in principle, the Bill will command widespread support.

The Bill focuses on a relatively modern phenomenon: financial or so-called white collar crime. Financial crime and fraud are as criminal and as big a menace to society as theft, robbery and burglary. They need to be dealt with as effectively and as severely as other crime. But the increasing sophistication of modern financial markets and modern fraudsters means that the law has to be strengthened and kept up to date in a sophisticated way to eliminate loopholes and remove technical defences. For that reason, the Bill is technical and, I am afraid, complex. It includes measures on insider dealing, on banking and on money laundering. The Bill will substantially increase the powers available to our enforcement authorities to bring fraudsters and insider dealers to justice.

A vital section of the Bill, to which I attach the utmost importance, is the part that tackles the profits of drug trafficking. We need to strengthen our law yet further against money laundering by and on behalf of drug traffickers. The substantial success of our enforcement agencies against the drug trade must be backed by laws which prevent the people detected and convicted from ever enjoying the profits of their trade. We shall be proposing that ultimately the Bill will deal with terrorist finances. Those are extremely serious crimes and I hope that all hon. Members will agree that we need to tackle them with vigour and determination.

The Bill is not a measure that will open up issues of political division or principle within the House. I believe that its aims will attract near-universal approval. I might almost hope—perhaps optimistically—for a little praise for the Government for their prompt action. Recent experiences of Criminal Justices Bills will remind the House, however, that in this sphere it is important to get the detail right.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I should like to ask about the intriguing matter that the Bill will deal with terrorism in due course. Will that mean the confiscation of assets and will it be an amendment to the prevention of terrorism Act? Why was such an amendment not introduced in the House of Lords and why was such provision not in the Bill when it commenced its passage?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): That is a good point.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that it is a good point. However, an amendment to an aspect of the law different from that in the first draft of the Bill is required. The time has come to improve the Bill and to extend its provisions to cover confiscation for terrorist offences. From what the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has said, I gather that he will welcome those amendments when they are presented.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the Home Secretary be able to use the Bill to rectify two of the mistakes in the Criminal Justice Act 1991—unit fines and the inability of courts to take previous offences into account? Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that there are no little details in the Bill which will make it more difficult to convict criminals? That was the effective result of the previous measure.

Mr. Clarke: The matters to which my hon. Friend refers are outside the scope of the Bill. I entirely share his concern about the way in which the provisions of the 1991 Act are working in practice. At the moment we are anxiously looking at the way in which the unit fines system works. I share the view of the Magistrates Association that in principle unit fines are right. However, we know that in practice they are producing some odd results, perhaps partly because of the way in which the rules to implement the Act have been drawn up and partly because some magistrates courts are not familiar with their powers.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State who will reply to the debate is personally taking charge of the current review of unit fines. He and I hope that we may be able to get the system to work as closely as possible to the way in which it was intended without the need for more primary legislation. However, we shall introduce primary legislation if that is necessary. I share some of my hon. Friend's concerns about other provisions of the 1991 Act which may not be working out as they were originally intended.

The 1991 Act followed a long process of consultation with the magistrates and the judiciary and others, but now the magistracy and the judiciary are expressing discontent in a way that certainly strikes a chord with me. We shall look at the matter again. If primary legislation is required we shall have to present another Bill. All hon. Members will accept that such matters must be tackled with care because we do not want rushed provisions that will go wrong. As soon as parliamentary time allows, I shall introduce such primary legislation as is called for.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) underlines my point that the House should scrutinise the Bill with special care to make sure that we get the law right and strengthen it against money laundering, financial fraud and other offences with which the Bill is designed to deal.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I should like to put some questions to the Minister before he moves to the more technical parts of the Bill. He says that we should not move too quickly in such difficult areas. Why did the Government move so quickly and consult so inadequately about the drafting of the Bill? For example, the stock exchange was provided with draft clauses at the end of July and was expected to supply answers by the end of August, which is a curious month for consultation in the stock exchange. There was no consultation at all with the CBI. That does not seem to be the right way to embark upon producing the measures that the Government hope to see.

Mr. Clarke: There has been enormous consultation on the part of the Bill that deals with insider trading and that

consultation will continue. I shall deal with that when I come to the relevant part of the Bill. That matter is being handled by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury who is in his place. He and his Department have been consulted and have submitted draft clauses.

We shall continue to consult, and if we are satisfied that further amendment is required to make the position clear and satisfactory to the legitimate interests of the stock exchange and others, we shall consult on further draft clauses. This part of the Bill is being taken forward with considerable care. It is essential that we do not do anything that will damage the ordinary, legitimate activity of the City, which is so vital to the country's economy. As I have said, we shall consult for as long and as widely as is necessary in the same way as we have consulted carefully so far.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Home Secretary spoke about drugs and in that context part II of the Bill is important. I should like to mention the effective work of the north Wales police in drugs-related crimes at the port of Holyhead and perhaps even on the English border. If the Minister wishes to crack this problem he must ensure that there are more police. I would like an assurance that he will look carefully, seriously and urgently at the request by the north Wales police for 54 policemen on their establishment. Will he please do that?

Mr. Clarke: That is an extremely ingenious request. I agree that the police and the Customs and Excise have been successful in the seizure of drugs and the prosecution of those who are responsible for trafficking. That is not a function of having more and more policemen but of ever-improving intelligence and effectiveness in deploying the specialist squads that are required. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are more suitable occasions for discussing police manpower and deployment. We have an excellent record on increasing police manpower. It expanded enormously over the 1980s and it is obvious that continued improvements in the way that manpower is deployed is more important than bids each year from police forces.

I propose in the police reforms that the north Wales police and every other force will not have to come to the Home Secretary each year to ask him to decide how many police should be deployed in each county force. I propose much more discretion for chief constables and a strengthened police authority. They will decide how best to deploy the resources that are within the ability of the economy to afford. However, those are matters for another day.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): My right hon. and learned Friend spoke about a review of the unit fines system. People, magistrates and judges are incensed by the fact that a middle income man exceeding the speed limit on a motorway at 2 o'clock in the morning will suffer a more severe financial penalty than most drug traffickers. People are not asking for a review of unit fines. They want them abolished and previous powers restored.

Mr. Clarke: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. I have said that I do not like the way in which the unit fines system works. That is why my hon. Friend the Minister of State is again urgently addressing the matter. In principle, courts have always related fines to the ability of the offender to pay. That must continue so that a comparatively prosperous offender who can afford it will pay a large sum for a speeding offence and a not very well-off thief will pay no more because he may not have the means. However, for a thief and certainly for a drug offender, fines may not be the appropriate penalty: custodial sentences of some kind may be called for.

We are addressing the anomalies that appear to be occurring in practice so that we retain the sensible provision that a financial penalty, when appropriate, should reflect the ability of the offender to pay without some of the absurdities that have occurred. Some of those absurdities were self-inflicted by people without means who did not fill out the form and were fined the maximum amount. Some magistrates do not take any action against people who have not filled in the form but impose the maximum fine. I hope that such hiccups can be eliminated in practice. Meanwhile, we need to look again at the rules.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The Minister was asked about recruiting more police but that is pointless unless they are backed by the actions of sheriffs and judges in Scotland, for example. The public perceive inconsistencies in sentencing but nobody seems to review the performance of sheriffs and judges and, no doubt, magistrates in England. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend will bear that in mind.

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor is responsible for the judiciary. No Minister ever comments on the sentence in any individual case.

We give the powers to the courts, and we expect the courts to make full and proper use of those powers. I should stress that it is not part of the Government's policy to inhibit the courts in the proper exercise of their powers. If the Criminal Justice Act 1991 is impeding in some way what the judiciary feel is their public duty, we will rapidly address that and remedy it as soon as we can. In the end, it is a matter for the judiciary to impose the right sentence based on the facts of a particular case. Parliament is here to indicate the range of penalties we think are suitable and give them the powers that they need. I hope that, in Scotland and south of the border, the powers are used.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I must get on. I cannot allow a second question about the police in north Wales. I have been generous enough already, and I would now like to turn to the detail of the Bill.

The House must return—although it may not be willing to do so—to the legal detail. The objects are worthy; the text requires some explanation. I hope to guide the debate by setting out some of the detail as clearly as possible.

Part I of the Bill fills some gaps in our courts' jurisdiction to try offences of fraud and dishonesty with a significant foreign element. It enacts, with some modifications, the recommendations of the Law Commission's 1989 report on the subject. Part I applies only to England and Wales; Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own legal systems, and this part will not apply there. Part I is a largely technical adjustment of existing legal rules, and remains rather daunting reading. It may help if I try to set out briefly the existing legal position and how part I will change it.

The courts in England and Wales exercise a "territorial" jurisdiction, which means, with very few

[Mr. Clarke]

exceptions, that they are only able to try people for crimes committed in England and Wales. Part I retains this important principle, but is designed to change the rules by which the courts decide whether or not an offence has been committed in these two countries. That is not as straightforward a matter as it might at first appear. As the Law Commission explained in its report:

"The planning, preparation and execution of the many operations which are involved in a complicated swindle frequently takes place in several different countries. Under the present law none of the participants can be prosecuted here unless the last event which makes up the underlying crime occurs in England or Wales. Moreover, in cases in which those concerned are detected before they have completed their purpose, it is unlikely that they will be prosecuted in the country where they plan to reap the benefit, and because the underlying crime was not complete here they cannot be tried in England and Wales. In the result, they will in all probability not be convicted anywhere".

I will try to give a more day-to-day example. Let us imagine that a criminal in London places an advertisement in *The Times* inviting people to invest in a non-existent factory in Japan by paying money into a Tokyo bank account. A victim responds to the advertisement, and instructs his bank to transfer money to Tokyo. When the criminal retrieves his money, he has no need at all to flee to South America—unless he wishes to escape from our winter weather, or has some other purpose—because as things stand he has committed no offence under English law and cannot be prosecuted here. That is because the last element of the crime—obtaining of the proceeds in Tokyo—did not occur here. So, if the victim can be induced to part with his money outside this country, then our courts will not have jurisdiction.

This gap in jurisdiction was largely theoretical in the past but it has become more and more real with the advent of new technology, which has made the transfer of money around the globe an easy and everyday—or, rather, every-minute—activity. We want the law to keep up with the fraudsters, if not ahead of them. So this Bill will provide that, in a case such as I have outlined—where a fraud has a significant connection with this country—our courts will have jurisdiction, whether or not the final element of the crime occurred here.

The substantive fraud and dishonesty offences to which this change will apply are listed in clause 1, and are called group A offences. Experience tells us these are the sort of offences committed by the international criminals at whom this measure is aimed. If the list needs amending in future to catch up with developments in the criminal world, The Secretary of State is given the power by clause 1 to add offences to the list or to delete them, subject to Parliament's approval.

Part I will also catch those who fully intend to defraud others but, through no merit of their own, fail to do so. In the case I gave earlier, the criminal would still be guilty of an offence here even if the police had spotted his advertisement and arrested him before anyone had lost their money.

Clauses 5 and 6 fill another gap in our law by giving our courts jurisdiction over incitements, conspiracies and attempts in this country which are aimed at the commission of the equivalent of a group A offence abroad; there needs to be an equivalent offence in the country concerned. So, for example, people who plot in this country to defraud victims in Japan will in future be guilty of an offence here and be triable by our courts.

Mr. Ashby: The example my right hon. and learned Friend gives is one of obtaining property by deception in the United Kingdom. There are many cases of this sort and it is the Attorney-General's reference No. 2 of, I believe, 1986 that part 1 is intended to cover. What worries me is whether my right hon. and learned Friend can assure the House that potential defendants will not be put in double jeopardy by being tried abroad—because most of the crime will be tried abroad—and, if they are aquitted abroad, retried over here, or vice versa. It would be a gross injustice if people were to be put in double jeopardy and be tried several times around Europe for offences committed inter-state. Will my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that that will not happen?

Mr. Clarke: With great respect to my hon. Friend, I am not sure that it is as clear as he believes it is that the example I give is of an offence in this country. I would incline to the view that it is not. Although I accept that there are conflicting authorities, they are probably sufficiently in conflict for no one to be prosecuted. I think there is little chance of double jeopardy in that particular case unless a person was foolish enough to go to Japan, because it is not necessary to go there to get the proceeds.

We are making it clear that someone in this country who commits a crime the last element of which takes effect in Tokyo is committing an offence here so long as a relevant part of the offence was committed in England. I think that is a valuable clarification of the law.

I quite accept, however, that my hon. Friend has a good point about double jeopardy. We do not want international crime to be dealt with in such a way that people keep being tried in different countries for the same offence. I will be happy to address that point again, or others will in Committee.

We need safeguards, but I think we can assume that in practice prosecuting authorities around the world will not normally keep prosecuting the same person for the same offence as he foolishly moves around the world going from jurisdiction to jurisdiction to collect the full total of his just deserts. I will give more thought to that point and, if necessary, address it in Committee.

Parts II and III of the Bill deal with money laundering and the confiscation of the proceeds of crime. I am glad to say that these parts received most attention in the debates in another place. I think this is the most important part of the Bill as far as the general public is concerned. We can and must have many serious discussions about the causes of crime; debates about the changing nature of society and the restoration of values are important but rarely come to definite or immediately practical conclusions.

The most straightforward specific cause of crime—which is most tangibly within the reach of government, the authorities and the public to tackle—is the abuse of drugs and the illegal traffic in drugs. Police, Customs, the courts and the public must be helped to maintain a relentless fight against drug trafficking; but the trade is immensely, fabulously lucrative, and the best policing efforts will be in vain if the profits are not attacked and retrieved by the courts of every country affected.

One of the main purposes of my visit to Latin America last year was to discuss with Governments menaced by

hugely wealthy drug organisations how we might strengthen international action against that ill-gotten wealth. Britain is in the forefront of countries that have ratified the Vienna convention, legislated against money laundering and got under way with the seizure and confiscation of criminal gains, but we must go further. I am determined that Britain should have one of the most effective—and just—sets of legal provisions in the world to take the fight to where it damages drug trafficking most—the removal of the vast profits which inspire and finance the individual traffic.

Part II will amend and strengthen the confiscation procedures in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that these measures and all the other measures that this House has enacted in recent years are effective only if the basis of the intelligence information which the police and Customs authorities receive in the United Kingdom is well organised? Will my right hon. and learned Friend refer to the increasing success of our drug liaison officers overseas and to the way that they channel back intelligence which is used by the regional crime squads, Customs and the police? Is it not that—not necessarily the number of police and Customs officers—which makes their work effective? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is the effectiveness of the information that is received and how it is made use of that will make the measure that we propose to enact today successful?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. His question relates to the detection of drug trafficking in particular but also to intelligence about where the assets are going. Intelligence is the key to any success with drug trafficking or terrorism. Our drug liaison officers around the world are extremely courageous and invaluable people, and they have had enormous success. Our activities in that area are as good as those of any other country. They probably rival those of the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, although that agency enjoys vast resources, compared with ours. The organisation and effectiveness of the individuals who specialise in this work matters far more than just pouring in huge numbers of people to do routine work. Organisation and effectiveness are how one makes progress. That is why we have made substantial progress in recent years.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Personally I welcome very much the fact that the British Home Secretary went to South America to discuss this problem on the spot and to see for himself, but what has come out of his visit and what is the strategy for persuading the hard-pressed Governments of countries such as Colombia and Peru to do something, however willing they may be, about an acute terrorist problem for them?

Mr. Clarke: If I may confine myself to Colombia, we provide considerable material assistance to the Government of Colombia, who are fighting courageously against very powerful drugs cartels which threaten their ability to govern their country. The Government of Colombia are on the right side in this struggle and they are making good progress. We are contributing very much to the training of their most effective police units, which operate in the jungles and search for the coca itself and the laboratories. We are also giving valuable assistance in developing their criminal justice system. They are therefore setting up a much more effective system for prosecuting and bringing to justice those whom they arrest. Since I went to Colombia, we have given further material support to the Colombian Government for that purpose.

I discussed also with the Colombian Government how we could take further forward bilateral agreements with them on the confiscation of the assets of drug traffickers. The trade is often organised by a combination of Colombian and British criminals, working in international organisations. I hope that we shall make progress on that front, too. We are actively working with the Colombian Government. It is important that we, from our end, as well as the other European countries and the United States, work with the Colombians against something which is just as much a threat to Colombia as it is to ourselves and which needs to be tackled at international level.

Part II will make its contribution to the Bill by strengthening yet further the procedures that were introduced in the 1986 Act. Hon. Members will recall that when it was introduced the 1986 Act was described by some people as draconian, but its measures were necessary and justified. The 1986 Act was intended to remove the profit motive by allowing the confiscation of all the trafficker's proceeds from drug trafficking, following conviction. The Act was also intended to ensure that the profits from drug trafficking could not be recycled to fund yet more trafficking. That Act needs to be strengthened.

This part of the Bill—clauses 7 to 15—is largely based on the report of the Home Office working group on confiscation, which was published in May 1991 for consultation. That group was established in response to the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on drug trafficking and related serious crime, published in November 1989. The Home Office working group found that the 1986 Act had worked reasonably well, but it identified a number of important practical difficulties in its operation.

I do not propose to go through each clause in detail. Instead, I shall draw the attention of the House to those provisions which I consider to be the most important.

Clause 7 will end the uncertainty that has arisen in the courts over the standard of proof applicable in confiscation hearings. It makes it clear that the standard applicable is the civil standard—and its probability. This was, I believe, the intention when the 1986 Act was passed, but it was not made clear on the face of the legislation. Clause 7 also relieves the court from following the confiscation procedures in the 1986 Act each time that it convicts a drug trafficker.

Confiscation will take place only when notice is served on the court by the prosecutor, or at the court's discretion. This will filter out those cases in which there is obviously little or no benefit, or no realisable property. This does not mean that we are softening our approach to drug traffickers. The minor cases that do not attract a confiscation hearing under the new arrangements will continue to be dealt with severely by means of fines and forfeiture orders, as well as by imprisonment.

Clauses 12 and 14 will allow the court to confiscate proceeds in circumstances where that is not possible at present. Clause 12 will allow the prosecutor to return to the court within six years of a conviction for drug trafficking to seek a revaluation of the offender's benefit from drug trafficking, where further benefit has

[Mr. Clarke]

subsequently come to light. Clause 14 will enable a confiscation order to be made, even if a convicted trafficker dies or absconds. Confiscation will also be possible where a defendant absconds before conviction. We have included safeguards, such as rights of audience for third parties at confiscation hearings and compensation where an absconder returns and is actually acquitted.

Part II also contains the primary legislation necessary to implement a European Community directive on money laundering, following the proposals set out in a Treasury consultation paper last May. The United Kingdom was closely involved in the drafting of this directive. Since it draws heavily upon the 1988 United Nations convention on drug trafficking and money laundering, which the United Kingdom ratified in June 1991, very little legislation is necessary.

Three new or extended criminal offences are created in the money laundering area: first, failure to report knowledge or suspicion of money laundering gained in the course of employment; secondly, acquiring, possessing or using the proceeds of drug trafficking for less than adequate consideration, in the knowledge that they are such proceeds; and, thirdly, prejudicing an investigation into money laundering by tipping off a third party.

Part III deals with the confiscation of the proceeds of crime in general. The effect is that a number of the changes made to the Drug Trafficking Offences Act in part II, which I have just described, are read across to other organised crime in part III, by amending the general confiscation provisions in part VI of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

This is an extremely significant change. We are extending the existing and most of the new drugs money laundering offences to crime in general. Until now, it has not been an offence to launder the proceeds of any crime other than drug trafficking and, in certain restricted circumstances, terrorism. That allowed a suspected money launderer to say that the money he was dealing with came from pornography or serious fraud rather than from drug trafficking and enabled the suspect to avoid being convicted of money laundering. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that that was absurd and indefensible. I am pleased to say that the banking and financial communities have given their full support to these new measures, which extend the money laundering provisions to most organised crime. Ministers are extremely grateful for their help.

I am also glad to be able to announce to the House that the Government intend to introduce in this House amendments to the Bill in Committee to reproduce, in the terrorism legislation, many of the changes being made in part II of the Bill to the confiscation and money laundering provisions contained in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. Part III does not, as at present drafted, apply to the proceeds of terrorist offences because they are not covered by part VI of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. However, the Government regard tackling terrorist funds as an equally high priority.

The United Kingdom was the first country to introduce legislative measures against terrorist finances. These measures have given the police an additional and invaluable tool, which has enabled them to tackle the funds themselves and to obtain information on the movements and activities of the terrorists.

Finance remains the lifeblood of terrorist organisations. Such organisations and those who handle money on their behalf have become increasingly sophisticated in the way in which they raise and launder money. Disrupting the fund-raising efforts of terrorists and confiscating their resources and the proceeds of activities should be as important a new tool against terrorism as it should be against drug trafficking and other serious organised crime. I am sure that the House will agree that it is only right that the measures that are taken against terrorists' finances should, as far as is possible, match those taken against drug proceeds. Personally, I hold both forms of crime in the same profound contempt.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): As I understand it, once someone has been convicted of drug trafficking, the proceeds, whether or not they are related to that specific offence, can be confiscated. Will the same apply to terrorism and other offences?

Mr. Clarke: Some confiscation powers are already available under the prevention of terrorism legislation. In Committee, we shall table amendments to cover the new provisions on laundering, but first we must decide which of the provisions on drug trafficking should be read across to terrorists' finances. That will enable us to consider the total amount that has been raised and how far the assumptions which are an important part of the drug trafficking provisions should apply. We shall table amendments that, as far as is sensible, reflect the drug trafficking money laundering provisions.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Are the provisions on confiscation and on money laundering, which I believe stem partly from an EC directive, in place in other EC countries, because what the Home Secretary is saying makes the degree of co-operation at EC level under the third pillar of Maastricht even more important? It would be helpful to know at some stage whether these provisions and those on terrorism operate in other EC countries.

Mr. Clarke: All EC countries are making the changes to their domestic law necessary to apply the directive. The United Kingdom was at the forefront of countries pressing for a directive, because measures against drug trafficking and terrorism are not effective unless they apply throughout the European Community. Without notice, I am not sure how many countries have completed the legislative steps. I believe that the United Kingdom is ahead of others, but we are all slightly beyond the date by which we are meant to have implemented the directive. My hon. Friend the Minister of State may be able to give a more specific reply, but I am sure that there is no hesitation within the Community and that all 12 countries will fall in line with the highly desirable directive.

Part IV is, strictly speaking, the Treasury part of the Bill, which is why my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary is on the Bench. It amends and restates the law on insider dealing and in so doing implements the EC directive on the subject. Hon. Members will, I hope, agree that insider dealing is crime. Securities markets play a vital role in financing companies, on which our prosperity ultimately depends. Markets also hold a large proportion of people's savings invested directly or on their behalf by institutions.

If those markets are to operate smoothly, they must inspire the confidence of investors, and an essential element of confidence is fairness. Insider dealing, if unchecked, destroys that confidence, which is why the Government made insider dealing illegal in 1980.

We believe in the benefits of having an EC directive on insider dealing, and Britain again played a leading role in negotiating the directive. With effective legislation in place across the Community, investors will be able to invest more confidently across Europe and to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the single market. The directive's detailed provisions will greatly assist in the pursuit of insiders who seek to cover their tracks by dealing across borders.

Mr. Ashby: My right hon. and learned Friend rightly says insider dealing is effectively theft on a grand scale from a number of poor investors. Is part IV covered by part I, and if not why not?

Mr. Clarke: Off the cuff, subject to correction by my hon. Friend the Minister of State in his reply, it must be. Part I will cover a range of international crime and if insider trading is being conducted across borders, the same rules as set out in part I will apply. If my off-the-cuff response is incorrect I shall ensure that a correction——

Mr. Donald Anderson: It is not a category A offence.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman points out that it is not a category A offence. He has had an opportunity to look it up, but he may be wrong. A more considered reply will be given later. The Economic Secretary is also taking the opportunity to look at this part of the legislation, for which he is directly responsible.

Nevertheless, the desirability of moving on insider trading is accepted by all of us and the Bill extends our legislation on insider trading to areas of conduct covered by the directive that are not currently illegal but are generally accepted as being wrong. I want to make quite clear to the House the Government's determination to ensure that legitimate business practices will not be jeopardised. I know that some fears have been expressed in the City and elsewhere, but nothing in the Bill will prevent the sort of contact between companies and investors that properly takes place today. The Bill will not require changes to the legitimate practices of investment analysis or mean modifying underwriting arrangements.

Indeed, much of the new legislation is similar to existing law. It will continue to be an offence for an insider who possesses inside information or someone who has obtained inside information from an insider—in deference to views expressed in another place I will, as far as possible, avoid describing that someone as a "tippee", which is a particularly poisonous addition to the English language —to take advantage of the information by dealing in securities to make a profit or avoid a loss. It will continue to be an offence for an insider or tippee to encourage someone else to undertake such dealing and for them to disclose inside information.

The definition of inside information is little changed from our present legislation. It includes information that relates to particular securities or to a particular issuer or issuers of securities, but not to securities generally or issuers of securities generally. The information must also be specific or precise, not have been made public, and be such that, if made public, it would have a significant effect on the price of securities. But unlike existing legislation, which applies only to companies securities, the new legislation will apply to all listed securities. It will apply to gilts and local authority stock and all securities traded on exchanges throughout the Community rather than just those that operate in this country.

Under the Bill, any individual with direct access to inside information will be an insider; they will no longer have to be connected with a company, as the present law requires. The Government believe that this change, which reflects the directive, is desirable because it is possible for someone to have direct access to price-sensitive information without being connected with a company.

The range of circumstances in which insider trading is prohibited will be widened. The Bill's prohibitions apply to all transactions which involve a professional intermediary, whether on or off market. The move from the trading floor to screen-based trading has made the market much more difficult to define than when legislation was passed in 1980. The new legislation seeks to treat the market in terms of those transactions that are likely to contribute to the price formation process for a security. As a result, the new legislation will apply to dealings in Eurobonds, which are generally listed within the Community but traded off market.

There are two further ancillary offences in addition to dealing—disclosing inside information to someone else and encouraging someone else to deal.

However, I should make it clear that innocent activity will not be penalised. Conduct will not amount to a criminal offence unless a person knows that the information he possesses is inside information and that he has the information as an insider or directly or indirectly from an insider. For example, someone who deals while in possession of information that he believes to be in the public domain will not fall within the ambit of the legislation even if his or her belief turns out to be misplaced. There will be no offence where someone did not intend to use inside information to make a profit or to avoid a loss because he would not be "taking advantage" of the information. There are various exemptions and limitations to ensure that the legislation does not impact

As for penalties, the Government made it clear in 1980 in their response to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry's report on company investigations that we proposed to retain the criminal law as the primary means for punishing insider dealers. Accordingly, the Bill carries forward the penalties that apply under our existing law, which are up to seven years' imprisonment with a fine.

The Bill's insider dealing provisions are the result of considerable discussion between the Treasury, practitioners in the City and representatives of industry in general. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) complained, but there has been consultation on the broad principles of the legislation and on an initial draft of the clauses in the summer, and consultation has continued since the Bill was introduced in another place.

As I have already said, the Government are aware that there is still a wish for greater certainty about the effect of the legislation. We have listened to the representations made and will continue to do so, and we shall make further amendments where we are convinced of the case for so doing.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Why has the existing legislation on insider dealing been so ineffective? During the past five years, there have been 30 prosecutions but only 13 convictions.

Mr. Clarke: I do not think that those figures are wholly accurate. They are in the right ball park but they are not spot on. There have been convictions. The total number of convictions is not the only measure by which to judge the effectiveness of such a provision. I am sure that the provision has a considerable deterrent effect on what would otherwise be trading of below acceptable standards in securities, which is treated as a serious criminal offence in this country.

We have played a part in introducing the fresh directive, which is giving rise to the need to strengthen and extend the law. It is extremely important for London's reputation as a financial centre that our standards are as high as any others. We must make it clear that those who make improper use of insider information will be treated as criminals, brought before the courts and prosecuted. If the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) believes that the existing legislation is not sufficiently effective, I am sure that he will welcome the Bill, which seeks to make the law more effective and extend its scope.

Mr. Maclennan: What the Home Secretary says about the deterrent effect of the legislation may be true; it is hard to prove. However, he will be aware that there is widespread and genuine concern, expressed most notably by Lord Alexander of Weedon on Second Reading in another place, that many cases of alleged insider dealing, which have been brought to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry by the stock exchange, among other authorities, have not led to effective prosecution. There are serious questions about enforcement in cases where there is significant evidence.

In preparing this legislation, has the Home Secretary considered whether there is a need for parallel self-regulatory measures for the City or other institutions in order to provide a civil remedy to back up the effectiveness of the criminal remedy?

Mr. Clarke: Concern has been expressed in both directions. Some people in the City are worried about the ordinary, legitimate practices of investment analysts and others being threatened. We can reassure those who have such fears and will continue to do so during the consultation process. Others are worried that we do not always enforce the law as strictly as we might, enforcement being in the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions or, more often in practice, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, cases are brought.

Sadly, it is the case that we must first get the drafting right so that the law can be enforced effectively. That is why we shall continue to consult Lord Alexander and anyone else who wishes to give his views. Secondly, there must be some self-regulatory provisions. There is a role for the stock exchange and the City generally to ensure that the criminal law is paralleled by proper self-regulation by those responsible for the markets. People such as Lord Alexander and other leading lights in the City will be anxious to ensure that self-regulatory activity also exists.

Finally, part V of the Bill contains various minor measures. I do not need to trouble the House with them except to mention clause 43. It extends the jurisdiction of United Kingdom courts where a fraudster takes part in or organises here fraud against the European Community budget in other Community countries. It will ensure that the United Kingdom is and is seen to be taking positive action against Community fraud, and will help to allay the legitimate fears expressed in both Houses.

The Bill deals with a number of serious mischiefs which I hope that all hon. Members will condemn. It makes a number of changes that will not harm legitimate business or threaten the law-abiding, but it will greatly improve our ability to investigate and prosecute a wide range of financial crimes. I know from earlier interventions that hon. Members are concerned about various criminal justice issues. They may be disappointed about the scope of the Bill which started life in another place last October. They may feel that it does not go wide enough to tackle all their concerns, but there will be other opportunities—I hope before too long, if I have my way—for us to consider many of them.

Although there are some pressing problems outside the scope of the Bill, that would in no way detract from its importance. We are dealing with very serious crime. The Bill will significantly strengthen the ability of the enforcement authorities and the courts to deal effectively with white collar crime and will do so in ways that I hope all hon. Members will be able to support. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.6 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): As the Home Secretary said, the Bill spans a disparate set of issues, but they have in common a concern for the growing internationalisation of crime. The impact of modern communications, travel, computer technology and cross-frontier trading has given renewed scope to organised criminal activity. It is essential that the law keeps pace and that old common law rules —or, indeed, old statute—which are right for one era do not continue unamended or unchanged when plainly wrong or inadequate for another.

There is no disagreement about the general purpose of the Bill, although there is some disquiet about the drafting of some parts and the content of specific provisions. They may be archetypal matters for the Committee stage and for those who will have the pleasure of participating in that stage, but they are also important matters to be raised on Second Reading. I begin with the issue of drugs and drug trafficking, which I believe will be of paramount concern to hon. Members and the public.

There is no doubt that drugs are a dangerous menace to our society. There is increasing evidence of a rise in the number of drug addicts, of a link between drugs and crime, the prevalence of drug trafficking and, perhaps most alarming of all, the number of young people even of school age who are being drawn into early experimentation with and use of drugs.

I do not think that anyone, whether working with drug abusers or in drug enforcement, believes that the problem is diminishing. It is not. It is growing, and the greatest danger of all is complacency in the face of the threat that drug abuse poses to our country. The figures for the latest year for which they are available show, for example, that the number of addicts notified to the Home Office rose by some 17 per cent. and that that followed a 20 per cent. increase the previous year. The number of new addicts has risen by a similar number. Although the numbers of seizures of course reflect success by our drug enforcement

agencies, in 10 years they have risen more than threefold, and seizures of heroin have increased by more than 200 per cent. Even making allowances for changes in procedures and greater success by the drug agencies, those figures should cause concern.

The number of persons found guilty of drug offences has risen almost threefold in 10 years. Again, the most worrying feature is the rise in the number of young drug offenders. The number of offenders under the age of 17 has risen tenfold in as many years, and the number of those between 17 and 21 has risen fourfold over a decade. Offenders under 21 represent 40 per cent. of offenders but 80 per cent. of the latest yearly increase in offending.

Anybody who knows the King's Cross area in London, as do hon. Members who pass through it on their way to their constituencies, will know of the appalling drug problems that have recently been highlighted by the *Independent on Sunday* and other newspapers. There have been about seven deaths from drug-related causes in the space of nine days. The police in those areas and in many other parts of our inner cities do their best in extremely difficult circumstances. My hon. Friends the Members for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) have campaigned long and hard on the problems of King's Cross, and have raised the issue specifically with the Home Secretary. I hope that he will respond positively.

The drugs problem is increasing, yet Government policy in other areas, not only in the Home Office sphere, is withdrawing some of the most vital support needed in the fight against drug abuse. For example, until the end of last month, the Department for Education had 100 drug advisory posts, but it has now ceased to fund them and says that it is up to local authorities to do so. The plain fact is that in present circumstances local authorities will not have the resources to fill the gap. That means that those posts, which perform a great role in educating our young people about the dangers of drugs, will no longer exist. It cannot be sensible to pass legislation that, rightly, bears down on those trafficking in drugs, yet at the same time to allow other Government Departments to make decisions in other areas that run entirely counter to the fight against drugs.

Exactly the same could be said about cuts in the youth service. Three quarters of those involved in that service expect to make cuts this year, and the urban programme faces similar problems. There are cuts in residential provision for drug addicts and abusers.

A pamphlet recently published by the trade unions representing people working in Customs and Excise estimated that, as a result of changes in funding, about 400 Customs officers engaged in the war against drugs would be lost. I do not know whether that estimate is correct; I hope that the Minister who replies will deal with the question. Again, it would be bizarre if we attempted to deal with people who had been caught committing drugs offences and had been convicted if in other areas we were taking steps that undermined the fight that we should all support.

Although the number of drug trafficking offenders has declined in proportion to the number of drug offences overall, there is no doubt that drug trafficking into the United Kingdom is increasing. The value of drugs seized by the Customs and Excise has multiplied by a factor of about 20 over the past few years. The United States estimates that drug seizures account for about 10 per cent. of the drugs destined for the United States market. If we apply the same criterion to our seizures, we find that drugs with a street value of as much as £2,000 million enter the United Kingdom every year.

The report on "Drug Trafficking and Related Serious Crime" published by the Home Affairs Select Committee a few years ago said:

> "The National Drugs Intelligence Co-ordinator ... estimated that there is at least £1,800 million derived from drug trafficking in the United Kingdom. In its written memorandum, the NDIU noted that such vast amounts of money circulating within the legitimate banking system may have a destabilising effect on smaller financial institutions. The NDIC also indicated that, despite the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the United Kingdom continued to be a major centre for money laundering. Indeed, he said that the United Kingdom was regarded by the United States, Canada and some others as an offshore banking system"

On the basis of that report and of the evidence that we have accumulated, there is no doubt that we must fight the drugs problem at both a national and an international level.

I was interested to hear the Home Secretary make a point arising from his visit to South America. Reading the many detailed background papers, I came across the bilateral confiscation agreements made between our country and other countries whereby we can confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking via arrangements made with other countries to facilitate that process. Clearly that is most important in helping to crack down on people engaged in drug trafficking. I noticed that absent from the list of countries with which we have such agreements were the names of countries such as Colombia, Thailand, Afghanistan and Peru. When the Minister winds up, perhaps he will tell us whether any progress has been made towards concluding agreements with those countries. It seems important that some of the main drug trafficking centres should have reciprocal arrangements such as those that have worked well in other areas.

At this stage I raise the problem caused by drug traffickers' use of Nigerians, especially Nigerian women, as drug couriers to enter this country. Apparently, large numbers of poor Nigerians, especially women, receive long gaol sentences here. I understand that a recent survey revealed that all the children taken into care by the London borough of Hillingdon, in which Heathrow lies, are Nigerian. That is an immense problem, to which the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), as chairman of the all-party penal affairs group, drew attention last year.

I should be obliged if the right hon. Gentleman would comment on the concern that, although, for obvious reasons, the sentences are long, they are not having any deterrent effect. Can he tell us what arrangements are being made to bring home to people in Nigeria the consequences of undertaking such actions, and the need to clamp down on that drug trafficking route?

Like the Home Secretary, I feel that, whether we like it or not, it is correct to deal with the detailed provisions of the Bill. We supported the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, and we support the basic thrust of the Bill. Some of the changes that it makes are welcome, but some raise serious issues of principle that it is right at least to canvass on Second Reading. As has been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House, that is especially right in view of the problems that have arisen as a result of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. We should take special care to ensure that the Bill is well drafted.

[Mr. Tony Blair]

The 1986 Act allowed the police to obtain information about a suspect's affairs and to restrain the removal of his assets before trial—that is rather like a criminal form of a Mareva injunction. The court was given the power to make an order after conviction confiscating the entire proceeds of drug trafficking from the offence for which the person has been convicted and also from other drug trafficking. The court was also given the power to assume that the assets of an offender, certainly for up to six years before the proceedings, were the proceeds of trafficking unless the defendant proved otherwise.

Those powers in the 1986 Act have been described as draconian. Clearly they are draconian; they were meant to be. Draconian powers are fully justified because of the appalling evil that they are designed to counter. It is clear that confiscation orders have been of considerable use. Perhaps the Minister will give us the precise figures when he winds up, but I believe that about 1,000 such orders have been used in the past year. None the less, because of the nature of those powers, it is important to consider them carefully and ensure that they are drafted and used properly.

The debate in another place has been of great benefit in preparing for this debate. The discussions were of high quality and went into great detail, and they raised a number of points which deserve investigation.

The Bill makes some significant changes to the 1986 Act. At present, confiscation proceedings are mandatory; they will now be permissive if the prosecution wants them to be so. If the prosecution declines, the court has the power to order them. Under clause 8, as the Home Secretary said, the court can determine sentence before confiscation, rather than, as now, having to complete confiscation before sentence.

The clause introduces two further changes which have aroused some controversy and at which it is worth our while to look for a moment. First, the clause changes the standard of proof for the confiscation of property from drug traffickers from the criminal to the civil standard—in other words, from "beyond reasonable doubt" to "on the balance of probabilities". Secondly, it obliges the court, rather than simply permitting it, to make statutory assumptions about the defendant's assets. Whatever assets a defendant has, the assumption is that they are the proceeds of drug trafficking.

There are now, therefore, a number of fairly unusual features in the procedure for confiscation. That was the point of my intervention in the Home Secretary's speech and I may return to the matter in a moment. We should examine the justification for those features.

First, the proceeds that can be confiscated under the 1986 Act and under the Bill are not just those that are the product of the particular offence for which the person is being tried, but all proceeds from drug trafficking, whether a criminal trial has taken place or not. Secondly, to prove that such assets are the proceeds of drug trafficking requires only a civil standard of proof. Thirdly, the court is obliged to assume that those assets are the proceeds of trafficking unless the defendant shows otherwise.

As I read the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Redbourne, the effect of the assumptions not being disproved is that they stand as facts. In other words, the confiscation applies to all drug trafficking irrespective of the particular offence, and the court is entitled—indeed obliged—to assume, unless it is proved otherwise, that all the property of the defendant is the proceeds of drug trafficking.

That point caused some concern in the other place. If the issue of the standard of proof is taken in isolation, it could be argued that the recovery of proceeds from drug trafficking going wider than the particular offence is almost akin to a civil suit for fraud, for example, and that, therefore, a civil standard of proof is not unreasonable. However, the accumulation of a lower standard of proof plus the assumptions that go a long way towards establishing proof and their mandatory nature somewhat restrict the ability of the court to take into account all the factors that it wishes to take into account.

Whatever people think about the Criminal Justice Act 1991, the real problem with it is that it imposes far too much of a straitjacket on the court in relation to sentencing. We should at least be careful, especially in relation to the mandatory nature of the assumptions, in deciding whether it is necessary to go that far. There is no evidence of which I am aware that courts have been hesitant about assuming that the assets of a defendant are the proceeds of drug trafficking. In the absence of any concern that courts have been reluctant to apply the provisions, that point is at least worth looking at.

I am not sure whether the Home Secretary dealt with this point. The proceeds of other offences, such as armed robbery or organised crime other than drug trafficking, carry no such assumptions and only the proceeds of a specified crime can be confiscated. Drug trafficking is treated differently from armed robbery and from other organised crime. I am not sure whether the Home Secretary wants terrorist offences to fit into the category of drug trafficking or of armed robbery. In any event, there is a clear disparity in the way in which such offences are treated. No doubt the Minister of State will tell us the reason for that. It may be that experience shows, for example, that the life styles of drug dealers are so bound up with drugs that it is reasonable to apply different procedures. If we are making that distinction, it is right that we should justify it properly.

Clause 18 deals with money laundering. Under the clause, a person is now to be guilty of an offence if "he knows, or suspects" that another is money laundering, and if he learns that fact in the course of his work and then fails to disclose it. I assume that that is an attempt to comply with article 7 of the European directive of June 1991, because the directive uses the words "know or suspect" in relation to money laundering.

It has been said in the other place that to make someone guilty of a criminal offence merely because he suspects that somebody is guilty of money laundering rather than because he believes it or knows it places too low a burden on the prosecution. I should like the Minister to deal with two points on that. First, will he confirm that a subjective test will be applied under the legislation? In other words, will the prosecution have to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the accused suspected that money laundering had taken place and not merely that it was reasonable for him to do so or that he had grounds for doing so? Will the prosecution have to prove that he possessed that subjective state of mind at the time?

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly than anything else, the provision will make a great deal of difference to the way in which banks and other financial institutions

operate. It will impose a fairly high degree of awareness on bank officials and others about the nature of the money with which they are dealing, and about its possible sources and the uses to which it will be put. It is right that we do that, but we should understand that there will have to be great changes in the ways in which those financial institutions operate. If there are not, quite lowly officials within the banking system may find themselves responsible in circumstances in which the real failure is the failure of higher management to give them proper training, to instruct them on the right things to look for and to ensure that they are able properly to keep track of the money with which they are dealing.

A report that repays reading if one can afford it—fortunately, I did not have to afford it—is the Touche Ross report on money laundering and risk which contains the results of a recent survey. The facts revealed are fairly shocking. First, it is estimated that the total sales—this is a truly staggering figure—of cannabis, heroin and cocaine in the United States and in Europe in 1989—more than three years ago—were more than $120 billion, of which $85 billion was laundered. If the Home Affairs Select Committee is right in believing that much of the laundering takes place in this country, that is reason enough for strong legislation.

The report then says that there were low levels of awareness and that fewer than 50 per cent. of stockbrokers or life insurance companies had educated staff on the prevention of money laundering or introduced specific controls. The report says that there is a clear need for financial institutions to establish proper practical guidance so that money laundering is spotted at an early stage.

It has come to my attention that the number of disclosures of money laundering following this legislation is estimated to triple from about 5,000 a year to as many as 15,000. I hope that the Minister will deal with the issue of resources, because such disclosures will require much more investigation and possibly more tricky investigation, as even a suspicion will have to be reported. It is clear that anyone in a halfway responsible position in a financial institution will make it absolutely clear that at the first opportunity he will draw to the attention of his superiors his suspicion that such activities may be taking place.

The Home Secretary dealt with the problems of the jurisdiction of the courts. I make one particular point about that. It is obvious at the moment that, if the last act necessary for the completion of an offence takes place in this country, the courts have jurisdiction. If it does not, they do not. The central change is that under the Bill, if any relevant act—that is, any act necessary to prove a conviction—takes place here, the courts will have jurisdiction. That follows in part from the recommendations of the Law Commission in April 1989.

We live at a time when large sums of money are controlled by international fraudsters and it is surely right, and in accordance with the principles of comity of nations, that, if any part of the action takes place here, there is jurisdiction. I gather that the Bill was substantially amended in the House of Lords, and I pay tribute to the work of Baroness Mallalieu in ensuring that the provisions were considerably tightened up.

Finally, let me deal with the issue of insider dealing. Let us be clear that everyone wants to root out insider dealing: it destroys the integrity of the market and undermines confidence in share transactions. There is no doubt that the present law—or, perhaps more accurately, the present system—of investigating and prosecuting insider dealing leaves much to be desired. I understand that, over the past five years, the stock exchange has drawn the Department's attention to more than 100 cases of suspected insider dealing. There have been some 33 prosecutions—the Minister will no doubt tell us the exact figure—only about 16 of which have been successful.

In the other place, Lord Alexander suggested that there should be a City regulatory authority to exercise a parallel jurisdiction—to force, for example, the disgorging of profits or a penalty or redress—running alongside the criminal law. I hope that the Minister will comment on that. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who speaks for the Opposition on such matters, thinks that that is worth investigating. As he has rightly said, the overall regulatory system may be so inadequate at present that any attempt to run a parallel system alongside the criminal law may fail. Once again, however, the objectives are in danger of being damaged by inadequate drafting.

The Home Secretary said that this part of the Bill made few changes to the law. I think that the changes that it makes are quite significant, and they have certainly given rise to concern. In place of the present 1985 Act definition of insider information as information not generally known to people dealing in the relevant securities, there is a new definition of insider information, which includes information which

"has not been made public".

That is a much broader definition. That may be right and, again, it follows the wording of article 1 of the 1989 European Council directive. But what is public and what is not will be pretty difficult to define.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I refer the hon. Gentleman to section 10 of the Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Act 1985, which is broadly similar to what is included in the Bill. It starts from a different place in working up compliance with the directive, but broadly the effect is the same—so it should be business as usual.

Mr. Blair: With great respect, I am not entirely sure that that deals with the point. The critical definition concerns the nature of the information itself. At the moment, insider information is defined as information that is not generally known by those who deal in the relevant securities. Under the new definition, insider information is simply information that

"has not been made public".

That immediately gives rise to the question of what "making public" means. In other words, what constitutes publication will determine what are the necessary elements of an offence.

I am not sure that section 10 of the 1985 Act deals with that point, although that can no doubt be considered in Committee. Concern has been expressed among analysts, fund managers and others that the provision could inhibit entirely proper dealing. A brief has been prepared by Clifford Chance, among other leading solicitors' firms which operate in the field. It is worth taking such concern seriously, and I hope that the Minister will do precisely that.

The definition of dealing is to be broadened so as to include those who do not receive information direct from an insider. This is a somewhat technical point, but the defence under section 3(2) of the 1985 Act allows the use

[Mr. Blair]

of market information about a given transaction when that information is being used for the purposes of completing a transaction. That is most obvious in takeover activity. Under the Bill, however, market information can be used, but only when it is "reasonable . . . to deal" in that information. Concern has been expressed that the term "reasonable to deal" is so broad that it could give rise to uncertainty as to whether a criminal offence was being committed. I understand that the Treasury has said that it will issue guidelines on that point. The Confederation of British Industry and others have said that the guidelines should be statutory. I should have thought that, if we are constructing a criminal offence, the more that is in the statute itself rather than the guidelines, the better.

The provisions are technical and complex but, as the Home Secretary said, they are also important—and fundamental to the fight against drug abuse. In all these matters, a common thread emerges: crime is rising rapidly. In each area covered by the Bill, enormous problems of detection and prosecution occur. Ultimately, a criminal justice system means not just effective laws and effective enforcement but strong policies of prevention. The war against drugs and drug abuse means tackling demand as well as supply. The rooting out of insider dealing needs a culture of honesty and openness in the City as well as rules that forbid such dealing.

The Bill is one part of the fight against drug abuse and malpractice—and that fight is only one element in the fight against all types of criminal activity. The scale of crime in Britain today is a scandal. It weakens our ability to function successfully as a society and it destroys the quality of life for many innocent and law-abiding people. For the reasons that I have given, we shall not oppose the Bill on Second Reading, but we give the Government notice that, in the coming months, we shall grasp every opportunity to harry them for their failure to act against that scandalous level of crime, to bring forward coherent policies to combat it, and to treat crime as seriously as the people of the country they govern.

6.36 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): First, I add my congratulations to the Home Office team—and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in particular—on this further effort by the Government to tackle the horrible problems of drug misuse. It is worth reminding ourselves that the Bill flows from the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, which, in establishing new crimes, giving the police and Customs and Excise substantially increased investigatory powers and establishing regional drug squads, not only represented an incredibly important step forward in this country but gave other countries a lead in the fight against drug misuse. I welcome the Bill.

My right hon. and learned Friend the referred to the way in which the Bill introduces a civil standard of proof—the balance of probability—rather than the criminal standard of "beyond all reasonable doubt". I seek an assurance that that will enable the police and prosecutors to get the top men—the big boys. So often, as the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, legislation has been used to capture the carriers and the traffickers—the small people—while the big boys have seemed to get away with it. I hope that that change, and the fact that the courts will gain powers to confiscate further proceeds which may come to light after the initial confiscation order has been granted, will enhance the probability of pursuing and taking the proceeds away from the big organisers of big crime.

In particular, I welcome the new offence created for failing to report knowledge or suspicion of drug money laundering gained in the course of a trade or profession and the other elements which bear on drug money laundering. The clearing banks have taken great strides in establishing methods of policing drug money laundering within their own banks and between themselves. I should like to be reassured that those banks can incorporate into their established procedures the rules which will apply under the Bill.

Will the Minister reassure the House about how the present law is being applied by other financial institutions such as building societies, stock markets, insurance companies and accountancy companies or partnerships? If there is any doubt about whether the present law is being applied sufficiently, I hope that the Bill will give added impetus to organisations involved in financial services to do better in future.

Under the terms of the Bill, certain funds to combat drug trafficking and extradition will be placed on a statutory basis. I wonder what that means. How much funding is involved and to what will it be applied? With regard to funding and organisation, I also wonder how the operation of the new law might be affected detrimentally by changes in the organisation, funding or operation of police forces in this country. That may be a slight tangent, but it is so pertinent to the application of the Bill that it would be good to have some reassurance from Home Office Ministers that nothing which might conceivably affect the organisation of our police forces will affect the efficacy of this good legislation.

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend has raised an important issue which was covered in previous reports by the Select Committee on Home Affairs. Will he take into account the fact that this month marks the anniversary of the establishment of the national criminal intelligence service, which was designed to meet my hon. Friend's point? It was designed to provide for better investigation of serious and organised crimes—80 per cent. of its work now relates to drug-related crime—and, through that service, the regional crime squads and the drugs wings of those squads co-ordinate the work of local police forces. My hon. Friend may feel that that meets the concern that he has expressed.

Mr. Rathbone: My right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) has gone into greater detail in relation to the point that I was making. I hope that none of what he referred to will be jeopardised. Similarly, I hope that the European extension of that into Europol, which was a British Government initiative, will not be jeopardised and will lead to the application of the same methods of intelligence-gathering on a continent-wide basis that we have applied on a national basis in this country.

What plans do the Government have to establish even closer liaison in future with other European countries and, on a bilateral basis with countries elsewhere in the world, to persuade them to adopt legislation similar to this Bill, which falls so well within United Nations conventions,

within the Vienna convention and, in European terms, within European Community directives? Until other countries apply the same kind of laws that we have been developing in this country to control drug misuse and drug trafficking, much of our activity will unfortunately come to naught. I pay tribute to the Government's international initiatives in that sphere over the years. The British Government can, with justification, hold their head high with regard to the control of drug misuse.

However, the Bill has missed the opportunity to require confiscated moneys to be applied in order further to tackle drug misuse problems in this country. Moneys seized abroad through international co-operation can be used in this country for further funding of drug seizure and policing methods when foreign Governments pay that money to this country. Those moneys amount to a sizeable sum of £3 million or £4 million.

It is an anomaly, however that, at the end of 1991, the most recent year for which figures are available, some £35 million was available entirely within our own control, but the Treasury got its hands on that money—I am glad that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury is on the Front Bench to hear this—and it was not used specifically to further the efforts of the police and their hard work in terms of containing this hideous problem.

My final point was touched on by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, and I believe that it should also be stressed from the Conservative Benches. The Bill is admirable and should be welcomed. Sadly, however, other parts of the Government are not marching to the same tune. In that regard, I mention specifically the Department of Health, which has unfortunately removed the ring fencing of funding for drug and alcohol treatment centres. They are in jeopardy, no matter what my colleagues or Ministers might say.

In addition, the Department for Education has done away with health education co-ordinators. They are perhaps the most important element of Government activity in tackling drug misuse because it is at that level —in schools and talking to young people—that we reduce the demand which fuels all the other problems of trafficking, money laundering and criminality associated with that which the Bill is designed to tackle. I commend my colleagues for introducing the Bill.

6.47 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I commend the work of the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) in this country and in various international forums in heightening the awareness of the House and of the public about drug abuse. I echo what he said about the very important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), that we must see drug enforcement and other matters within the context of overall Government policy.

If we are to be concerned properly about drug money laundering and drug abuse, we must also consider prevention. On a right hand and left hand basis, I hope that those in government who are concerned with the criminal law will also consider what the Department of Health and the Department for Education are doing in terms of weakening the supports that prevent young people from entering drug abuse. We cannot consider one side of the problem without the other. In this area, and in other areas, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has enunciated the proper principle of being tough on crime and the causes of crime. That same principle can be applied well to this matter.

I suppose that the first response of practitioners and members of the public to a Criminal Justice Bill is, "Oh, not again." There is not a lot of time for catching breath and perhaps consolidating. That is especially true in the light of experience with the Criminal Justice Act 1991. Many experienced magistrates are resigning over the question of the unit fines and a general unhappiness about the way in which prosecutions are hampered by the failure fully to take into account the antecedents of a defendant. Given the relatively small amount of parliamentary time which is at the disposal of the Home Office, it would have been ideal for the Government to use this existing vehicle. Clearly, mistakes were made in the 1991 Act. Would it not be possible, even now, for the Government to use the existing vehicle to remedy some of the deficiencies which have arisen as a result of the operation of the 1991 Act?

As a commentary on the lack of time of the Home Office, I say only in passing that the Home Secretary will be aware of the vexed question of Sunday trading, where the Government are seemingly resigned to allowing law breakers to continue their law breaking for at least another year and to do nothing about it. That is something which could equally be dealt with by the Government by adopting an existing vehicle—the Shops (Amendment) Bill which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). That is a suggestion which I proffer in good faith to a Government who, undoubtedly—especially after Maastricht—are looking for ways to cut down parliamentary time for Government legislation. My hon. Friend's Bill is a means so to do.

As the Home Secretary said, the Bill is complex and technical. It is to be welcomed in its broad thrust because it updates, closes loopholes and seeks to bring existing legislation into line with matters which have been revealed as a result of experience. The Bill is largely the result of expert discussion, whether at the European Community level, the Home Office working party level or the Law Commission level. The Bill has already been extensively covered in the other place.

Therefore, we are left with picking what is left on the bones, as it were, and drawing attention to some of the deficiencies. One of those deficiencies is the failure to amend the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 in accordance with the provisions of this Bill. I am glad that the Minister is taking that on board, albeit belatedly.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield said, we can make no reasonable points about part I, which relates to jurisdiction. The point about the danger of double jeopardy needs to be tackled by the Government. Parts II and III, which relate to the confiscation of the proceeds of crime and money laundering, are more relevant. They raise the question of civil liberties and where one must draw the balance. All hon. Members recognise the scourge of the drug trade and the way in which so many innocent lives, especially among young people, are blighted by the activities of 'godfathers' who are frequently beyond the reach of jurisdiction. In our search for justice against those godfathers and the couriers, whether they be from Nigeria or wherever, we should not lose sight of basic civil liberties, the standard of proof and suspicion—not knowing and believing, as in section 22 of the Theft Act 1968. Those matters need to be examined carefully.

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

There is a feeling of unease about certain provisions in the Bill. Some people believe that the balance—as a result of the Government's zeal, understandably, successfully to prosecute more people—may be tilted too far and that some basic civil liberties may be overridden in the process. It is not necessary for me to cover the specific points of concern. I have no problem with putting the assets of the drug dealers in jeopardy for a further six years after conviction. That is proper. It is clear that many drug dealers are able to hide their assets by sophisticated methods. It is proper that a term be placed on that, and six years seems to be reasonable. Nor am I worried about the civil standard with regard to confiscation, although I wish that this was at the top of the civil standard of proof set out by way of guideline.

I am concerned about clause 13, relating to double sentence. There is a certain sense of unfairness that, although a person has served a sentence rather than the goods having been confiscated, the possibility of confiscation still stands. That is wrong in principle. I was not convinced by the explanation given in the other place. Perhaps the Minister can tell us whether there is a precedent in criminal law for such a draconian provision in clause 13.

I have already referred to the question of knowledge or suspicion under clause 16 and it is not necessary for me to dwell on that. I understand that the Minister will refer later to part IV, which relates to insider dealing. We understand the need to comply with an EC directive, which appears to be the motive behind the inclusion of part IV in the Bill. I simply ask about the extent to which Britain had a substantial say in the drafting of the various definitions. Several practitioners are concerned that, in our attempt to implement the directive, we have made less specific some of the terms which are used in our domestic legislation. The Minister will know the terms which are included. I wonder to what extent we have diluted what we thought was the proper practice as a result of the need to compromise at the EC level.

I refer to my earlier point that, clearly, the current provisions are not working adequately. I am a veteran of the discussions which resulted in the Companies Act 1981. At that time, the Government were wary of having any insider dealing provisions. They claimed that it was better to rely on self-regulation, although manifestly self-regulation was not working. Clearly, there were problems as a result of that self-regulation in obtaining evidence.

The position for the past five years—the source of the figures is column 748 in the *Official Report* of 13 January 1993—is that there were 30 prosecutions and only 13 convictions. If those who embark on prosecutions adopt the normal 50 per cent. rule—is there a more than 50 per cent. chance of succeeding in a prosecution?—clearly, they are failing. They are making judgments which have not been proved adequate in practice, and they are failing when more than half of the prosecutions on which they have embarked have failed.

Is it the view of the prosecuting authorities that the difficulties in obtaining prosecutions derive from a feeling on the part of juries that insider dealing is fair game and something which perhaps should not be within the ambit of the criminal law, or are there fundamental problems in terms of definition which prevent prosecutions from being successful? Presumably there must be research into why the prosecutions are failing. After all, the motive behind part IV is to implement an EC directive and not necessarily to improve the quality of our domestic legislation.

Mr. Nelson: As the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) have talked about numbers of cases, it might be helpful if I were to try to clarify the matter. I understand that 28 prosecutions have been brought and that there have been 17 convictions. Of the 43 people who were involved, 22 were found guilty. The rate of conviction is rather higher than the figure or figures that the hon. Gentleman quoted. In such cases it is difficult always to secure the information that is necessary to mount a conviction. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was so right to point to the deterrence aspects as well as the prospects of mounting a successful prosecution.

It is entirely proper that the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who have the right to bring the cases that we are discussing, should be satisfied before, at public expense and in the light of all the other factors that are involved, such cases are mounted. The performance has been credible and along the lines of the average for fraud cases. The Bill's provisions should make the performance even more successful in future.

Mr. Anderson: If the rate of conviction is somewhat higher than that which the written answer suggests, it is still only just above the hurdle of the 50 per cent. rule. Given the expensive nature of these cases, that is something that the Government need carefully to examine.

We are talking about an amendment to our domestic law that perhaps the Government would not have wanted. It is an amendment which derives directly from our need to implement an EC directive. I say rather mischievously in passing that I hope that such provisions will be implemented fully and in a draconian way in Italy as well as in the United Kingdom.

There has been a series of Criminal Justice Bills, and the one before us is clearly to be welcomed. There are points of detail that need to be examined. We face the constant problem of catching up with modern, technical developments and others and responding to the sophistication of criminals. In so far as it goes, the Bill is welcome in that respect.

7.2 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): First, I declare an interest. I am a paid adviser of the Legal and General Group plc, which has interests in part IV of the Bill, both as a quoted company on the stock exchange and as an investment management business. I am pleased that I do not have to declare any other interest. Notably, I am not a lawyer. I rose to speak with some trepidation, however, before tangling with the able and qualified lawyers who have already involved themselves in the debate.

I shall commence by lamenting what is not in the Bill. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who in an intervention in the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary lamented the fact that we are not dealing with the problem of sentencing by way of unit fines, which were introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

We are creating something of a nightmare for the 29,000 lay magistrates and there is a crisis of morale. In my constituency we are feeling the effects of the problem quite severely. The most offensive part of the 1991 Act has been described by Lord Justice Taylor as an "ill-fitting straitjacket" on the sentencing policies of individual courts. I shall detain the House for a short while by quoting from the leader which appeared in *The Times* on 23 March. Part of it reads:

"The problems which have afflicted the Criminal Justice Act in its first six months illustrate the difference between sensible guidelines and rigid prescription. It is right that courts should be firmly directed in their sentencing. But the scales of justice cannot be reduced to an algorithm. The responsibility of magistrates to import local knowledge and expertise to the judicial process must be preserved. Rigidity and obscurity are no recipe for justice."

I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already taken those points on board.

I also lament the fact that we are not able to deal with juvenile offenders in our consideration of the Bill. I can vouch for the fact that juvenile offending is a major problem in my constituency. The local police could name the 20 or 30 juvenile offenders with whom they have to deal time and time again. It is clear that we must deal with the problem as quickly as possible. The difficulties experienced in reforming these offenders may be acute, but it is not fair on the victims of their crimes that they are allowed to roam the streets because the detention policies hitherto tried have not been successful.

Apart from those caveats, I give a broad welcome to the Bill. It is directed primarily to financial crime, which is every bit as heinous and damages the victims every bit as badly as ordinary crimes. We tend to become preoccupied, as I was when making my earlier comments, with crimes which have a direct effect on individuals in a visual or graphic way, but financial crime has its own victims and causes its own misery. I give a strong welcome to the practical alterations to the law which turn on matters of jurisdiction and the proceeds of criminal conduct. I strongly welcome the proposed improvements to the law on drug trafficking.

I wish to focus especially on part IV, which is concerned with insider dealing. My central concern is that there appears not to be a full understanding of how institutions and quoted companies seek to smooth the market, to avoid volatility in the stock market, to give confidence to the market. I wish to focus on how the market works now and the threat that the Bill might present to the way in which the market works currently.

The concerns which I intend to articulate have been raised by a wide range of people and organisations. I shall refer briefly to but a few. First, there is the Investor Relations Society. There is the Hundred Group of Finance Directors, which is a club for the finance directors of the top 100 quoted companies in the United Kingdom. The group states:

"the ambiguities implicit in the drafting of the Bill . . . are so serious that it appears to us that the legislation will hinder legitimate business activities and market practices."

The Association of British Insurers wrote to me as follows:

"We are particularly concerned, as major investing institutions, that the provisions will unduly inhibit shareholder-company communications and restrict the ability of companies to raise capital."

The CBI states that it

"believes that the current provisions of the Bill, if unamended, will seriously hinder the development of open lines of communication between companies and investors."

The Institute of Directors has also written to me. It states:

"The IOD's Law Committee, whose membership comprises a wide range of business, professional and academic expertise, was unanimous that the Bill, as drafted, was, in spite of the Treasury's clearly expressed intention to the contrary, capable of casting doubt on the legality of directors effecting normal commercial corporate transactions. It could, accordingly, create substantial difficulty, uncertainty and unfair exposure to criminal penalties for directors of industrial and commercial companies."

The British Bankers Association has also written to me, as have many other organisations which are respected by the Government, I believe, and whose opinions we should take account of when considering these matters.

A survey conducted by a firm of solicitors—Fishburn, Hedges, Boys and Williams—last September among 50 investing institutions found that 62 per cent. of fund managers believed that the new legislation would damage the quality of their service to clients by stemming the flow of information and hampering their ability to analyse companies. Furthermore, it was clear that institutions think that the Government's proposals will create more problems than they will solve. Far from cracking down on insider dealing, they will restrict the communication on which all investors rely.

The fundamental flaw in the Bill is an apparent lack of understanding of how the market operates. In common, I am sure, with virtually all right hon. and hon. Members, I am in favour of strong and clear insider dealing legislation. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, such legislation is necessary for the market to operate effectively and so that investors may have confidence that the market reflects the true value of quoted companies.

There are two sides to the operation of the market. There are the stockbrokers on the sell side, who seek to sell securities to investors, and there are institutional and individual investors on the buy side. Institutions account for the major part of the buy side, with individual investors forming a very small proportion of today's market.

There are perhaps a dozen standard forms of communication between quoted companies and the market. I shall list the six main ones. Published and half-year results are price-sensitive information. When they are made known to the market, they are made known publicly and there is no ambiguity as to their status. Other information will be given to brokers in a standard form and is counted as publicly available information.

Specific announcements might be made at press conferences. If the market is informed by brokers that profits have been forecast as X but that the company is fully aware that profits will be half X, the company may issue a profits warning, to make clear to the market what will be its likely profits, so that the market is fully informed and can effectively reflect that information in the company's share price.

The less public channels of information are more under threat from the Bill. I refer to meetings with buy-side analysts at which brokers' analysts are met on a one-to-one basis or in groups in order better to inform them of a company's nature and position. The purpose is to divulge not price-sensitive or inside information but facts which could improve the brokers' understanding of the company, which will necessarily affect their view of it.

There are also one-to-one presentations to large shareholders. This is an essential and growing practice in the City. They enable the City to gain a better understanding of British industry and vice versa—

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

something towards which Governments have been working for years. It is an important part of the communication process between industry and the City. There is also communication with small shareholders.

The last three practices relate not to public information but to legitimate information. If, for example, a company's published results prove to be very bad, investors and intermediate institutions are entitled to know of the problem which caused the fall in profits and the action that the company is taking to put the matter right. Such information will help to inform the share price. That is about giving the company the opportunity to explain its stance on key issues.

The objective of a responsible quoted company is to optimise its share price. I do not mean by that that it should try to bolster its share price at every opportunity because that would not be conducive to an optimum share price. Companies which attempt to bolster their share price at every opportunity tend to receive a low rating in the market, because the market does not necessarily attach the same importance to everything said by such a company as it would to a company which takes more care over the way it communicates with its shareholders.

The optimum share price is the best share price in view of all germane information and the state of the company. That means giving investors confidence that the price in the market is a fair reflection of the company's real value —that the brokers' profit forecasts are not wildly out. That avoids shock movement in share prices, which provides the biggest opportunities for insider dealers to make a quick and illegal profit.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that meetings of the kind that he described and the practices that he mentioned are vital to the smooth running of the capital markets and to the provision of capital to publicly quoted companies? It is most important that shareholders and corporate management should know and understand each other and should talk to each other regularly on a basis of confidence.

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the ability of companies to raise additional capital. They can do that only if there is general confidence in the value of their share price and if that information in the public domain is accurate and up to date. If brokers had information completely different from that in the public domain, the market could not operate effectively. If brokers were happy to behave in such a way, confidence in a particular stock would be seriously damaged, which ultimately would be in no one's interest. My hon. Friend highlights the important point that there is a different nut which will be caught by the sledgehammer nature of the Bill's wider definitions.

The process of conveying information, maintaining investors' confidence and ensuring a realistic share price must be safeguarded. The potential for damage could lead to more volatile prices, which would be bad for the confidence of investors and would lead to more surprises entering the public domain more frequently. That would increase the likelihood of sharp share price movements, which would be to the advantage only of those who dip in and out of the market for short-term gain. It would not be to the advantage of long-term investors seeking to secure the funds of policyholders or of the companies themselves.

Mr. Nelson: It is not my intention to keep bobbing up and down throughout the debate but as this is the part of the Bill with which I am most concerned, perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to comment.

Under present legislation, unpublished price-sensitive information cannot be disclosed at such meetings—just as in the future information which has not been made public, which is specific and precise, and which is likely to have a significant effect on the share price, cannot be disclosed at such meetings. I share with my hon. Friend his view of the importance of meetings between companies and their institutional investors and of occasional meetings with analysts. Nothing in the Bill should be used to interrupt those important relations and established means of analysts going about their business—and it is certainly not the Government's intention that any of the Bill's provisions should be used in that way.

Mr. Jenkin: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for clarifying so clearly the Government's intention, which is as I have always understood it. I am sure that most investing institutions and organisations to whose representatives I have spoken also believe that to be the Government's intention.

One problem, which is more a Committee matter than a Second Reading matter, is that the Bill will make it illegal for someone with inside information to encourage another person to deal in shares even if that other person is not told the information. That means that a director could, simply by having a meeting with a broker, without passing over inside information, make the broker an insider, causing the broker to go off-market, perhaps until the next results are published. In view of my hon. Friend's assurances, I am sure that that matter can be clarified in Committee.

I was greatly encouraged by the fact that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that amendments to clarify the issue—perhaps clarification is all that is needed —will be brought forward in Committee. With that caveat, therefore, I commend the Bill to the House.

7.20 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Bill's aim—to improve the ability of the criminal justice system to tackle white collar financial crime, including fraud, money laundering and insider dealing—is something to which all hon. Members would subscribe.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) has performed a valuable service in highlighting some of the concerns that have been widely expressed about whether the Bill, no doubt inadvertently, will catch desirable activities and increase uncertainties in a way that does nothing to advance its purpose of diminishing white collar crime.

It is not entirely satisfactory to leave such matters to be dealt with in Committee. That may be the conventional way in which Parliament deals with them, but we have a procedure—a pre-legislative Committee procedure— which would have been apt to take on board exactly the kind of points with which the hon. Gentleman so eloquently dealt.

The hon. Gentleman was right to list the number of institutions and groups of people who have expressed

concern. Parliament would have been helped if it had had an opportunity to hear those concerns expressed in a way that could have been provided if the matter had been considered at the right time.

I say that particularly because a considerable number of complaints have been made about the consultative process in the Bill's preparation. I drew that to the attention of the Secretary of State in the course of his opening speech, so I do not wish to labour the point now. However, the consultation before the Bill was published was not as extensive as it should have been.

It would be a good idea for the Home Office to take on board the strictures of the Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government's commission on the legislative process—a body on which I served along with Mr. Michael Latham, who used to be a distinguished Member of the House, and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell)—which drew attention to the widespread dissatisfaction with the consultative procedures, particularly on technical Bills, in order to avoid the kind of difficulties of which we have heard. That is not a party point.

However, the purpose of today's debate is not to draw attention to those concerns which will no doubt be returned to in Committee, but rather to deal with the broad principles behind the Bill. I think that the hon. Member for Colchester, North and others would agree that, whatever their concerns may be, and however abstruse and complex white collar crimes may be, such crimes are real and damaging. They are damaging to our marketing institutions and to individuals. The Maxwell pensioners and those who invested in Barlow Clowes know that they were not victimless crimes.

Many hon. Members are personally aware of the horrific expansion in drug trafficking and its appalling consequences. I shall not repeat matters on which the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) touched beyond reiterating my concern, and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends, about the continuing increase in drug trafficking in Britain. Notwithstanding evidence of the increasing success of Customs and Excise in pulling in drugs—I understand that the value of drugs seized in 1980 was some £10 million and in the latest recorded year for which I have figures, 1991, the street value was £200 million—as the hon. Member for Sedgefield rightly said, we do not know what percentage of the total trade that constitutes. If, as has been alleged, it is about 10 per cent. of that trade, we still have an horrifically large problem with which to deal and so must take whatever measures we can to reduce the profitability of the venture, and that is clearly what the Bill intends.

Like the hon. Member for Colchester, North, I want to deal more with the question of the effectiveness of white collar financial crimes—the part of the Bill that covers insider dealing—and my general concern about our apparent difficulties in tackling complex fraud in Britain. We were helpfully given the precise and up-to-date figures by the Economic Secretary in an intervention and they show that, of the cases referred, a small proportion have resulted in convictions.

I made the immediate concession to the Home Secretary that the deterrent effect of our existing law on insider dealing in particular is incalculable and no doubt great. But it is a matter of concern that we find it so difficult to make charges stick. I want later to make some suggestions about how we might improve that position.

In general, my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome moves to provide the criminal justice system with the means to apprehend and convict those who commit such offences, but we have some doubts about whether the Bill will do a great deal to enhance the effectiveness of our attack on the problems.

I welcome the proposals on extra-territorial jurisdiction. By way of an anecdotal aside, I can tell the House that as long ago as 1967 I introduced a private Member's Bill, the Toyko Convention Bill, which was enacted. It was designed to give extra-territorial jurisdiction to our courts for crimes committed on board aircraft to take account of changing technolgy and the greater frequency with which crimes were being committed on aircraft over which no one had jurisdiction. That principle must obviously be extended so that, as technology and trading across screens develops, we can apply new criminal sanctions. There will be many changes, and frequent Criminal Justice Bills will inevitably be needed to take account of such developments.

I suspect that we shall not have to deal with new technology or a change in perception of the seriousness of the offence of insider dealing. As long ago as the early 1970s, the Takeover Panel outlawed insider dealing for takeovers in its non-statutory code. A number of attempts have been made since then to provide a statutory basis for the effective treatment of such offences by our courts. However, the volume of legislation on the subject is testimony to the ineffectiveness of each piece of legislation that we have introduced, not to the development of technology.

It is appropriate to draw to the Government's attention the Bar Council's thinking on the broad issue of fraud trials. I well remember a debate in the House a few years ago on the report of the Roskill commission. I think that there were 12 participants in the debate, almost all of whom—if my memory serves me right—were lawyers. Eleven of them spoke against the Government's proposal that serious fraud trials should proceed without the benefit of a jury, using instead specialist judges with specialist assessors. In the face of that overwhelming opposition to the principle of the Roskill commission's main recommendation, the Government did not proceed with the proposal, and they were right not to do so.

The proposal has been referred to from time to time and perhaps it will be considered again by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice. Nothing that I have heard has suggested to me that the House was wrong then to recommend that we stick with jury trials in complex fraud cases. However, the Bar Council is right to advocate certain procedural changes in such cases—not least cases of alleged insider dealing covered by the Bill—that would enable the system to operate more effectively and fairly, and help juries to tackle the problems of dealing with complex fraud. The Bar Council's working group identified the central problem as the complexity of the cases relating to offences such as those covered by the Bill. The group stated that the complexity resulted from the increasingly sophisticated nature of the crimes that take place in the context of the global electronic financial marketplace.

The Bill does not deal with such problems, which is a pity, as it provided an opportunity to do so. The Minister of State, Lord Ferrers, dealt with some of the anxieties mentioned earlier, but he did not make any proposals to deal with the procedural difficulties. There are no easy or

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

quick solutions, but there are ways to assist juries in cases such as the Blue Arrow trial. In that trial, the jury members were expected to wade through a mass of minutiae in pursuit of important information. The Court of Appeal ultimately ruled that the case had become unmanageable, and consequently none of the convictions could be said to be safe.

One way of helping the jury to stay on top of the case would be to introduce special court procedures to clarify the issues and identify the relevant information before, and perhaps even during, a trial. Those procedures would be in addition to, but not instead of, normal trial procedures. There is no need to create a professional or semi-professional tribunal without a jury, only a need to find ways of managing the information more efficiently.

It would be interesting to hear the Government's view on what Lord Alexander of Weedon advocated in his speech on Second Reading, to which the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred. It seems that some of the cases that the stock exchange drew to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry might have been susceptible to examination, and proceedings might have been initiated that would have resulted in the disgorging of illegally obtained profits. Some compensation and redress might have been given to some of the victims of improper white collar crimes if the proposals advocated by Lord Alexander were adopted. Therefore, it would be of interest to know the Government's thoughts. I cannot imagine that it is a matter on which one would have a doctrinal view.

There is scope for extending the role of the judge in requiring coherent and relevant case statements from the defence, and for encouraging more extensive agreement in complex fraud cases between the defence and prosecution over the facts by means of a timetable procedure. That would enable the separate issues of the case to be dealt with in a rational and efficient manner. It would be much less confusing for the jury and would consume less court time. The jury could be presented with the relevant documents and summaries as each stage of the trial occurred rather than at the beginning of the trial in accordance with the timetable that had been drawn up. The presentation and summing up of the cases for the prosecution and defence should also be accompanied by written summaries to be used by the jury.

I make those suggestions tentatively, and they are not intended as a panacea for the ills of our criminal justice system in relation to white collar crime. However, they are intended to address a problem that the Bill touches on but to which it does not adequately face up. They would provide a valuable step towards giving courts the means by which to try such cases effectively, fairly and efficiently. That is necessary if we are to deter transgressions by those who could bring our markets into disrepute and cause great damage to our commerce and to the profits that the City brings to our country.

Without such a step, I fear that the Bill may be no more effective than some of its predecessors in eliminating the profitability of large-scale white collar crime. I hope that we shall not need yet another Bill in a few years to tackle these matters. Amendments to the criminal law procedure along the lines that I have suggested would give existing law a better chance to work.

7.40 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): This is the third time in the past year that I have had the pleasure of following the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). As on those occasions, he has made a considered contribution. It is also a pleasure to participate in a debate that has been largely uncontroversial. All hon. Members seem to support the thrust of the Bill. The Tokyo Conventions Act has been mentioned. I assure the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland that in the Market Harborough Conservative club we talk of little else.

I shall concentrate on part II of the Bill and especially on the clauses dealing with the burden of proof and related matters. Clause 7(1) amends section 1(1) of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. The amendment will be such that the requirement of the court to determine whether a convicted person has benefited from drug trafficking is no longer mandatory. That will allow the determination to be made at the request of the prosecutor or at the behest of the court on the court's motion.

That provision will dispense with courts wasting time and the money of the police and prosecution service making determinations in cases where the amount of the benefit is so small as to be not worth the investigation. A better use of police and court resources is to be commended, not least at a time when the Government's resources are limited and when we are concerned about the amount being spent on legal aid.

Clause 7(2) inserts a new subsection in the 1986 Act, subsection (7A), which states:

> "The standard of proof required to determine . . .
> (a) whether a person has benefited from drug trafficking, or
> (b) the amount to be recovered . . .
> shall be that applicable in civil proceedings."

From now on it is clear that the trial judge making the determination will work on the balance of probabilities at that stage of the proceedings. He will have to be satisfied that an allegation or fact is more likely than not.

I understand that a judge is currently entitled to make assumptions under section 2(2) and (3) of the 1986 Act when arriving at a decision. No standard of proof arises when the judge is deciding whether the assumption should be made. When the assumption is made, the burden falls on the defendant to rebut it on the civil standard. I understand that that follows from the judgment of the Court of Appeal in Crown *v.* Redbourne to which the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) referred.

Hand in hand with those amendments under clause 7 is clause 9 which requires the court to make the assumptions about property and expenditure which are set out in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act unless they are shown to be incorrect in the defendant's case or the court is satisfied that there would be a serious risk of injustice if they were made. If the court decides not to make the assumptions, it must state its reasons. It is an admirable advance that a court should be required by statute to give reasons for reaching a conclusion.

Clause 9 amends section 2 of the 1986 Act. Section 2(2) of that Act states what the court "may" do to determine whether a defendant has benefited from drug trafficking. The word "may" is replaced by "shall". Clause 9 inserts at the end of subsection (2):

> "The court shall not make any required assumption if—
> (a) that assumption is shown to be incorrect in the defendant's case . . .".

The required assumptions are set out in subsection (3) of the 1986 Act, but I shall not rehearse them. Despite the concerns of those who spoke against the 1986 Act that these were draconian measures, it now seems that the hon. Member for Sedgefield has recognised their value. I am sure that criminal practitioners, of whom I am not one, will also recognise the value of the Bill's amendments to the 1986 Act.

Clause 8 adds to section 1 of the 1986 Act a provision allowing the determining court to postpone its investigation for up to six months until relevant information has been obtained. That application can be made by the prosecution or by the defence or by the court on its own motion. It deals with the problem which can arise under section 1 of the 1986 Act when no confiscation order is made at the original determination on the mistaken assumption that the defendant had no realisable assets but when some are subsequently discovered. I understand that previously a court had only 28 days to vary its decision. Now it has a considerably longer time in which to right that injustice.

Clause 12 allows the court to vary an order to take account of increased values of assets. That is an especially welcome addition to the criminal law. It would be manifestly unjust if someone convicted of drug trafficking were able to benefit from the increase in house prices, land values or the value of any other proceeds that he had acquired as a result of drug trafficking but which were not available to be seized by the court at the time of the determination. I welcome that aspect of the Bill.

Clause 16 continues the fight against drug trafficking and those who benefit from it by making it an offence knowingly to acquire, possess or use another's proceeds from drug trafficking. It is easy to build up an empire and pass it on to one's friends and relations who will benefit from the proceeds of illegal acts. Anyone who knowingly benefits from such a gift or who acquires, possesses or uses another's proceeds will be liable on indictment to a sentence of 14 years' imprisonment. That also underlines the determination of the House and the Government to get to the root of drug trafficking—to hit the drug barons and their friends in their pockets.

I also commend clause 10, which tightens the pleading procedure on determination. The court will be enabled to inform the prosecutor that he must set out his statement of case. The defendant must respond to it within a given time. That procedure will save time, eliminate unnecessary controversy and save money, which is particularly short at this time.

The Bill is a further arrow in our armoury in the war against drugs. We already have the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987, which contains similar confiscatory powers in regard to Scotland, and the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990, which contains measures designed to facilitate the task of detecting drug traffickers and confiscating proceeds. It creates the offence of manufacturing or supplying substances while knowing or suspecting that they are to be used in the unlawful production of controlled drugs. The Bill, which I hope will shortly become an Act, adds to that armoury.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) says, we have the valuable work of the drug liaison officers abroad, with their intelligence, which is vital if all this is to work.

Given the lateness of the hour and the number of hon. Members who wish to speak, I will conclude my remarks. I invite the House to pass the Bill as soon as possible, not only because it is an earnest of our desire to stamp out the blight of drug dealing in our society, but because it is what the people of this country require us to do as swiftly as possible.

7.50 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The doubling of crime since 1979 and the increased pressure on the police and the courts mean that the criminal law needs to be strengthened. Therefore, in broad terms, the Bill is welcome.

Drug use is obviously a major cause of crime. Those who traffic in drugs and create a demand for the product are as responsible for the muggings, burglaries and deaths caused by drug users seeking money for their next fix, as the drug users themselves. Many criminals would not offend, but for the need to pay the pusher and the trafficker who supply the drugs. It is necessary to have tough and effective laws on drug trafficking and on the laundering of the proceeds of crime. The Bill goes some way towards that. The greater powers that it gives the courts are, in many ways, justified because of the size of the threat confronting us.

I want to deal not particularly with drug trafficking but with insider dealing, although some of the points that I raise will be relevant to drug trafficking.

The statistics on the success or otherwise of prosecutions in insider dealing cases show how difficult it is to secure a conviction. In the peak year of 1989-90, 10 cases were taken to the courts, involving the prosecution of 14 defendants, four convictions and nine acquittals. I assume that the Fisher case, the Coren and Greenwood case and the Guinness case account for some of those, although not all.

The statistics were disputed by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury. The statistics provided by the House of Commons Library suggest—and I note what the hon. Gentleman said—that until 13 January 1993, of the 104 cases reported by the stock exchange to the DTI, 21 were prosecuted, involving a total of 33 individuals and resulting in 16 convictions. That suggests that the complexity of the law, coupled with the complexity of the issues involved, makes it very difficult for those accused of insider dealing to be convicted.

In the late 1980s, I was involved in an insider dealing case as a defence lawyer. In that case two acquittals were secured. I noted the complexity and amount of information with which we had to deal. The evidence took over a year to assemble, and weeks to read and analyse. Meetings with counsels were complex and virtually interminable.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): And expensive.

Mr. O'Brien: Yes, they were certainly expensive.

In that case, the defence succeeded on a legal submission at the start of the trial. We had a whole series of legal points in the case which highlighted what we felt to be the inadequate way in which the legislation was drafted and its lack of clarity. I am sure that the defendants would have been aquitted in any event, but the Act was clearly lacking.

[Mr. O'Brien]

The Bill makes a number of welcome changes, but I fear that it does not take sufficient account of the need to clarify insider dealing legislation, and that we may need to revisit this area again in the near future.

The need to clarify both the way in which evidence is presented to juries and the legislation itself is very important. Unfortunately, I do not think that the Bill will do the trick.

One of the criticisms of the Bill, both in another place and by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), was that the legislation shifts the burden of proof in particular areas. It is an important criticism, and it is right that burdens should not be unnecessarily placed upon defendants. However, it is also important that cases are decided fairly, and the requirement for a fair and just trial means that a jury should understand the process of the trial and the relevant factors involved in making a finding of guilt or innocence. My concern is that cases of insider dealing are too complex and, where they are linked to factual and documentary material which is also complex, the job of a jury in such cases is extremely difficult.

There is a proposal from some sources of replacing trial by jury with trial by a judge and assessors for particularly complex cases involving dishonest dealings. I am reluctant to go down that route because it is a slippery slope and undermines the right of an individual to trial by jury in criminal cases; but, if we are successfully to try cases by jury, it is essential to simplify the number of issues involved, which requires the use of legal presumptions such as those in the Bill.

Although such presumptions may shift the burden of proof towards the defendant, they can have merit in these particular types of case. For example, under clause 37 the defendant must show that he did not expect the receiver of the information to deal. This replaces the previous and inadequate legislation which required proof of knowledge of the intention to deal, which was sometimes difficult to prove. Although in the Bill there appears to be some element of "guilty until proved innocent"—or at least proved innocent on the balance of the argument—these provisions will in many cases lead, because of the simplification of the trial process for the jury, to a fairer and more just verdict. They simplify the process and, by and large, do not place unnecessary burdens upon defendants.

One area that the Bill does not cover is the removal of the right of silence in insider dealing cases. That was part of earlier legislation. Having sat through two days of interviews conducted under those rules, and looking at the convictions resulting from the interviews, I would say that hopes suggested by the police and by some Conservative Members that removing the right to silence in other types of case might improve the rate of conviction may not be justified, particularly in complex cases such as insider dealing.

I have grave doubts that the interviews take place in a proper manner. Certainly, my experience was that documents of very considerable complexity, which were extremely difficult to follow, were presented to a defendant who was asked to deal with questions relating to share dealings which had taken place two years before. He had had no opportunity to go through those documents. If we are to deny the right of silence to defendants in complex cases, advance notice of areas of questioning and documentation should always be given. I hope that the Minister will look at that issue when the Bill is considered in Committee and that those who seek to undermine the right to silence will weigh in the balance the view that the proposal may not achieve its aim and could lead to additional injustice.

My main regret relates to what the Bill does not do rather than to what it does do. It provided the chance to undo the damage done by the Criminal Justice Act 1991. It is clear that insider dealing and cases involving drug trafficking will be affected by the sentencing restrictions imposed by sections 1(2)(a) and 29. They are cases which typically may have multiple count indictments or sample count indictments. It seems to me that the legislation that needs to be dealt with today is the Criminal Justice Act 1991. In its failure to do that, the Bill is massively inadequate.

When the 1991 Act was passed, the Government made it clear that the purpose of that measure was to reduce the number of people in prison. Its effect, however, is that persistent offenders with lots of previous convictions find that the court is restricted in its ability to take their record into account when sentencing. Some persistent offenders therefore get away with offences for which they should go to prison. It is frustrating for police officers and the public to see criminals arrested and brought before the courts and then to find that the courts are forced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to let them off.

Due to the enactment of that legislation the Government's law and order policy has lost all credibility; crime has doubled during their period of office and the 1991 Act is among the most ludicrous pieces of legislation ever to hit the statute book. By means of that Act, the Conservatives have added to their long list of citizens charters the citizens charter for criminals. The Act gives criminals more rights than they have ever had before and makes their lives easier than they have ever been before.

I welcome to some extent what the Home Secretary said about looking again at the 1991 Act, but that will take time, during which criminals who deserve to go to prison will not be sent to prison. While the Home Secretary consults, debates and prevaricates, other victims will suffer. There needs to be a sense of urgency about dealing with the Criminal Justice Act 1991. I hope shortly to put before the House of Commons a ten-minute Bill on the issue, which I trust that the Home Secretary and the Conservative party will be able to support.

I welcome, in broad terms, what the Bill does. As the Home Secretary said, it is right that it should be considered in detail in Committee so that the problems caused by its predecessor can be avoided. I am sure that we shall all be most vociferous in tabling the amendments that we think are necessary.

8.2 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): It is true that the Bill is unlikely to make headline news in the popular press. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made that clear in his opening remarks. None the less, it is a most important Bill, for it provides a variety of additional safeguards against white collar crime. There is no qualitative difference between this type of crime and any other. It is absolutely right that we should be

assiduous in tracking down and punishing criminals who may wear white collars and sit in offices but who are, none the less, common criminals. Therefore, I particularly welcome the provisions of the Bill which make life significantly tougher for those who engage in serious international fraud, money laundering and its attendant terrorist associations and, of course, the evil practice of drug trafficking.

In common with other hon. Members, I intend to focus on part IV, which deals with insider dealing. I ought immediately to declare an interest. I began my professional career as an investment analyst in the City. Subsequently, I moved into corporate finance with S. G. Warburg Group plc, for which I act as a paid consultant. I am also a non-executive director of a public company.

Insider dealing has been famously described as a victimless crime, but in my view it is nothing of the kind. Insider dealing, put simply, is a form of cheating. One set of victims, therefore, consists of those who are cheated upon. By implication, these are other shareholders and other market professionals; it is widely accepted that larger and more active City institutions—for example, those handling large pension portfolios—are likely to suffer the most. But the other principal victim of insider dealing is the City itself. If cheating were to become widespread, the market would quickly fall into disrepute, and confidence in London, as one of the world's major financial centres, would suffer.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary is in no doubt about the importance that the City as a whole attaches to his efforts to make insider dealing legislation more effective. I am sure that he has the support of the City and the House in those efforts. But for legislation to be effective, it must first be absolutely clear. As the workings of the existing laws regulating the financial markets have from time to time in practice suggested, we are dealing with an extremely complex set of issues that do not readily lend themselves to legislation. There is a need to proceed with very great caution if the ability of the City to continue with its proper function of transmitting important information to investors and the public is not to be impaired.

Reference has already been made in the debate to the fact that during the Second Reading debate of the Bill in another place considerable concern was expressed that no final decision should be taken as to the detailed contents of the Bill without the fullest possible consultation with the City institutions and investment banks, upon whose daily business it impinges. It is a source of great encouragement that such consultation has now taken place. Here I differ from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

I know that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has given full consideration to the large number of detailed points that have arisen from the consultation that has taken place since last autumn and from the consultation that continues to take place. I echo the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that one of the major improvements that has taken place since last autumn is that the word "tippee" has not found a permanent place in the text of the Bill. I only hope that it was removed in time for it not to have found a permanent place in the English language. Perhaps I should not have mentioned it.

As the Bill stands today, a number of outstanding concerns remain. I do not intend, the House will be relieved to hear, to list all of them this evening. The proper place for their consideration will be in Committee when I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will consider carefully ways in which the present wording of the legislation can be clarified. Only this afternoon my right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that he is ready to look carefully at suitable amendments that may be tabled to deal with these concerns. I was also glad to hear him say that he himself intended to table some amendments. He may be assured that the progress of such amendments will be studied with the greatest of care and attention by those who carry on legitimate securities business in the City.

Repeated assurances have been given that there is no intention, by means of the Bill, to make illegal business practices that currently are legitimate. My right hon. and learned Friend reiterated that point clearly today, as did my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. I very much welcome what they said. I do not for a minute doubt that they mean what they say, but the trouble is that those reassurances are not yet reflected in the Bill. As it is drafted, there is a distinct risk that some of the provisions in part IV will have precisely the effect of creating uncertainty over the legitimacy of currently accepted practices. That is perhaps mainly because a lack of clarity will make it too risky for present practices to continue.

Hon. Members have referred to the deterrent effect of the present insider dealing legislation. This, I believe, is very real. Reputable City institutions and financial service organisations are understandably most anxious to avoid any breach of the law, and their concern to be in no doubt about how the law will work, stems, perhaps, from that very anxiety.

I should like to highlight three key areas in which there appear to be particular problems. The first relates to stock market investment analysts—a subject that is very close to my heart. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that it is the role of analysts to obtain through research information about companies and sectors that can be used, usually in in-house publications, to provide fund managers with a basis for taking investment decisions. The key point it issue, which has been referred to in the debate, is that, to avoid prejudice to the role of analysts, it would be most helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister reconsidered the words "made public" in clause 33, which are somewhat unclear.

The issue has been widely discussed, but it is worth noting that the recital to the European Community directive, which the Bill implements, uses the words "publicly available", which is rather clearer and which seems to offer a preferable alternative with less risk of misinterpretation. It is an alternative favoured by the City, by the many organisations that were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), by the British Merchant Banking and Securities Houses Association and, perhaps most important, by the finance directors of public companies, who liaise with investment analysts.

Fund managers are not always required to pay close attention to all analysts—indeed, in my experience, the views of a number of analysts are regarded as a counter-indicator of what is likely to occur—but the reputation of a few analysts in certain sectors is such that their views are capable of moving the market in relevant shares. It is necessary, therefore, for the Bill to make it

[Mr. Peter Ainsworth]

absolutely clear that an influential analyst does not become an insider by virtue of the fact that he or she has reached a conclusion about the merits of a share.

Under the Bill, it appears that, if an analyst is fortunate enough to have such a high reputation that the disclosure of his or her views on a share might move the market, because those views are price-sensitive and have not been made public the analyst would not be allowed to express those views to a client, if to do so would encourage the client to deal in a share. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary would not want such a situation to develop.

There is a real danger that the well-intentioned measures in part IV could so impede the flow of reasonable information between companies, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North spoke so eloquently, that they could reverse the trend to corporate glasnost, which has been a feature of recent years and which has led to a freeing up of information on which to base investment decisions. We surely do not wish to encourage a return to the corporate secrecy of the bad old days, when one had to be a member of the chairman's club or golf club to know anything meaningful about what was going on in a company.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reconsider the way in which the Bill might apply to vendor placings and secondary share underwritings. This is technical stuff, but it is important to the smooth functioning of the City and the capital markets. It is unclear whether normal, perfectly legitimate practices associated with secondary underwritings and vendor placings will continue to be permitted under the Bill. Vendor placings are a frequently used method of financing acquisitions, and a good example of a secondary underwriting that might be close to my hon. Friend's heart is the forthcoming disposal by the Government of a further tranche of shares in British Telecom. It would be most unfortunate, to say the least, if there were any uncertainty about the legitimacy of the means by which this disposal or any other secondary underwriting might logically and appropriately take place.

I understand that it has been suggested during the consultations that vendor and secondary placings would be protected by the defence in clause 32(2) that persons taking part would not be intending to secure a profit by reason of the fact that the securities are price-affected, but as such people are inevitably engaged in business with a view to securing a profit, and as the nature of many of the transactions in question will be likely to affect the price, this does not seem to be a particularly robust defence. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to introduce a more precise and dependable protection for those who carry out a role that is integral to the raising of corporate capital.

Mr. Nelson: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall consider most carefully the thoughtful points that he has made, which is the advantage of the Committee stage. I draw his attention to part II of schedule 2, which provides exemptions for market makers, market information and price stabilisation, all of which are important aspects of what the professionals do in the market and should offer an exemption that measures up to many of the demands that were made in the consultation period. I shall carefully consider how much further the Government can go to provide further reassurances that do not drive a coach and horses through the intentions of the directive or the Bill, but I hope that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that we have tried to go some way to meeting the points he has made.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I am aware of the exemptions to which he refers. I know that all involved are grateful that it has been possible to incorporate them in the Bill and I welcome him saying that he will carefully consider the points that I have been making.

My third and final point concerns the way in which the Bill extends the definition of inside information beyond individual companies to cover groups of companies engaged in similar or competing activities. I understand the problem that the Bill is intended to tackle, but I was not wholly convinced by an example that was provided last September by a Treasury spokesman, who said:

> "If someone discovered that a company had closed down and then sold the shares of that company's competitor that would be insider dealing."

Insider dealing it might be, but it is possible to argue that it would be an extremely bad investment decision as well.

Perhaps I might venture, for future reference, an alternative example of the problem. If somebody learned that a company was shortly to be bid for and on the basis of that inside information immediately bought shares in another company whose shares were likely to rise as a result of the bid, he would be guilty of insider dealing. It seems perfectly reasonable to try to stop such activity, but the present drafting of the Bill is so broad that it could impede the operation of transactions where it is necessary formally to make certain interested parties insiders. It would be extremely difficult for any fund manager to allow himself to be made an insider on a particular share for the purposes of effecting a specific transaction if the effect of so doing were to preclude him from dealing in any other shares in that sector.

As I have said, these are complex matters which do not lend themselves easily to legislation. However, if we are to legislate, it is important to get it absolutely right. As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will know, substantial time and money is already spent in the square mile to ensure compliance with existing complex statutory regulations. I sometimes fear that this is better news for lawyers than for shareholders.

My hon. Friend said that several of the outstanding concerns will be covered by guidance. I have no doubt that it will be a great help, but I am sure he will agree that it would be preferable if they could be dealt with in the legislation itself. Uncertainty is a great enemy of confidence, and confidence is vital to the efficient working of any market. My hon. Friend, whose efforts to stamp out insider dealing deserve wholehearted support, has said in that context that he is a great believer in fear. I am certain that he meant fear of the law, not fear of the unknown. I have every confidence that the immense amount of work that he and his officials in the Treasury have put into getting the legislation right will bear fruit as the Bill, which is very welcome in many respects, passes through Committee.

8.20 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Many hon. Members have referred to the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and have especially criticised its provisions dealing with unit fines and related matters. I entirely endorse their criticism and I hope that, as well as conducting a review of the 1991 Act, the Home Secretary will get in touch with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who in the past few weeks published proposals to introduce into Northern Ireland legislation identical to the 1991 Act, the manifest failings of which are becoming daily more appparent.

The second preparatory comment relates to the speech by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who spoke on behalf of the Liberal party, and to that of the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), who complained about the lack of consultation. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland in particular referred to the *Hansard* Committee report and said that its recommendation of the use of Special Standing Committees and pre-legislative Committee stages would be appropriate. Such procedure featured strongly in the recent Scottish White Paper as being appropriate for legislation which was not controversial in party political terms. That is precisely what this is. I should have thought that such procedure should be adopted for measures of this nature.

In dealing with part I of the Bill, which deals with extra-territorial jurisdiction and certain offences, the Home Secretary referred in passing to Scotland and Northern Ireland. He said that part I would not apply to them because the two territories have their own legal systems. That is inconsistent because certain provisions in the Bill—three clauses in part V and all of the clauses in part IV—will extend to Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the Bill authorises the making of a negative resolution Order in Council equivalent to most of the provisions in part III and some in part II.

Against that background it is strange that the Home Secretary does not consider it necessary to have an equivalent provision with regard to part I or even to say whether there is any intention to introduce legislation in Scotland or Northern Ireland equivalent to part I. Many of the provisions of parts II, III and IV apply to Scotland anyway. It makes the Bill look rather like a dog's dinner.

As usually happens in these cases, I wish to draw attention to the inadvisability of legislating for Northern Ireland by way of negative resolution Orders in Council which the Bill authorises. As hon. Members will know, the negative resolution Order in Council will not be debated anywhere in the House. By passing the Bill, we are authorising legislation by decree and not providing for discussion of it. There is clearly no intention to discuss the Northern Ireland provisions now being authorised because there is no representative of the Northern Ireland Office on the Government Front Bench, so there is no one to comment on the possible application in Northern Ireland of the provisions authorised to be made by negative resolution Order in Council.

In any event, proceeding by negative resolution Order in Council is inherently inefficient. Such orders will be made only after the legislation has completed its stages because the legislative draftsman in Northern Ireland takes the view that he cannot draft his Order in Council until the Bill is complete and all its provisions are known —in other words, until it has received a Third Reading. That builds in a significant delay before the Order in Council is made.

The provisions authorised by negative resolution Order in Council relate to money laundering and the movement of proceeds of drug trafficking and other criminal offences. Of course, there may be movements from one jurisdiction to another and, in certain cases, there will be movement between Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom and vice versa. It therefore seems inappropriate that legislation is not coming into effect at the same time in all jurisdictions.

It is particularly inappropriate because the Bill makes provision for Scotland; for example, in clauses 17 and 19, which replicate for Scotland the provisions in clauses 16 and 18. It is the equivalent of clauses 16 and 18 which are to be made by negative resolution Order in Council. It does not make sense. There is an incoherence in the drafting of the Bill, which is inappropriate.

The provisions covering the proceeds of criminal conduct and the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking in particular are good ideas, and I was glad that the Home Secretary said that new clauses will be introduced in Committee to extend the provisions into anti-terrorism legislation. There will be provision in anti-terrorism legislation for the inhibition of money laundering and the confiscation of terrorist proceeds as well as criminal and drug proceeds.

That is especially appropriate as terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland to a significant extent now finance their activity through drug dealing. It is therefore not sensible to draw a distinction between laundering the proceeds of drug trafficking and laundering money used to finance terrorist activities. In any event, the laundering of money related to criminal activity is the same whether the criminal activity is defrauding people, trafficking in drugs or promoting terrorism.

The Home Secretary said that the intention was to provide a read-across from this legislation to anti-terrorism legislation. I assume that he was referring to the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Some of the Bill's provisions reproduce some of those introduced in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. The read-across is from the EPA into the Bill and through to the PTA. I see that the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) is nodding, so I have got the direction roughly correct.

It is good that the issue is being tackled. Some provisions dealing with the financing of terrorism were introduced into the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, nearly four years ago. I understand that they have been wholly ineffective, that no money has been recovered and that no proceedings have taken place. In reports on the PTA, Lord Colville described its powers as "unworkable", so I am glad that they are now being dealt with.

Provisions introduced into the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 are being borrowed in this Bill. I understand that, as yet, nothing has been done under the EPA and that there has still been no successful recovery. That is not a good precedent. I understand from various sources that it is expected that some proceedings will shortly take place under the EPA. I hope that they will be successful, but it is not a good augury for the provisions before us that the EPA provisions have been on the statute book for two years without having produced results yet.

[Mr. David Trimble]

I hope that when the new clauses are introduced in Committee the opportunity will be taken to examine some inconsistencies that seem to me to exist between the clauses of the Bill and the provisions in the EPA from which I understand that they are derived. For example, the Secretary of State said that, in amending the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, the Bill would make it clear that the civil rather than the criminal standard of proof applied, and would give the court discretion whether to make confiscation orders. However, unless I am mistaken, the EPA equivalent provision—section 47(1)—seems to imply a criminal standard, because it uses language such as:

"the court shall . . . if it is satisfied".

That does not appear to give the court discretion whether to make confiscation orders, so there is an inconsistency.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who spoke for the Labour party, said that he was worried about the assumptions on which the Bill required the court to proceed when determining whether assets were the proceeds of drug trafficking. But the Bill qualifies those assumptions in two respects. Clause 9(3) says that the assumption can be rebutted if

"that assumption is shown to be incorrect in the defendant's case, or"

it would be unjust to make it.

Of those two qualifications only one—the first assumption, as to whether it would be incorrect to make the assumption on the facts—applies in section 51(1), the equivalent provision in the EPA. The second—whether making the assumption would lead to an injustice—does not apply. That inconsistency needs to be ironed out.

None the less, the Bill provides a good opportunity to introduce a single coherent code that would apply throughout the United Kingdom. That is necessary. At present we have an unsatisfactory state of affairs, with different codes in the Prevention of Terrorism Act, in the emergency provisions legislation and in the legislation on drug trafficking. The activity of money laundering is essentially the same, regardless of the nature of the crime, so we should have a single code.

We should also ensure that that code is as effective as possible in geographical terms. That partly reflects a desire that it should be effective throughout the British Isles, but it relates to other aspects too. How effective will the legislation be concerning applications relating to money laundered through, say, Gibraltar, the Cayman islands or other such places? That, too is a relevant consideration. I am not sure that our legislation is effective with regard to those territories at present. There is an option to transfer the provision to such places as the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, but I am not sure whether it has been exercised. What about areas further afield which act as offshore banking centres for the United Kingdom, and through which money is laundered? We must make sure that we deal with them.

The Home Secretary dismissed certain matters in part V as minor, and mentioned only one clause in that part of the Bill. I shall refer to another clause in part V, which the Home Secretary did not mention—clause 44, headed, "Backing of warrants: safeguards." That brief phrase in the list of clauses conceals the fact that it deals with the thorny problem of extradition to and from the Republic of Ireland, specifically for terrorist offences.

That is a matter of considerable importance to us, and it should be important not only to those of us who represent Northern Ireland constituencies, but to all of us in the United Kingdom, especially in view of the terrorist campaign directed towards England and towards this capital, and directed from the Republic of Ireland and carried out by persons largely recruited there. That important matter is in the public eye because of events in the Republic of Ireland over the past few days—the arrests made there and the questions that have arisen concerning them and concerning extradition. Against that background it is slightly surprising that the Home Secretary saw fit completely to ignore clause 44.

Clause 44 makes provision for introducing into the present procedures—strictly speaking, those concern not extradition but the backing of warrants—what in extradition terms is called the speciality rule, the effect of which is to ensure that, if a person is transferred from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom on certain warrants, he can be proceeded against in the courts here only for the offences in the original warrants.

At present, no speciality rule applies between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. That is because we operate a backing of warrants procedure rather than an extradition procedure. In extradition procedures it is normal to have a speciality rule.

The matter became controversial in 1991 with the Desmond Ellis case. Mr. Ellis was accused of being involved in conspiring to cause explosions in the United Kingdom, and was extradited from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom for certain offences. The magistrates in England then proceeded to substitute different offences for the offences for which Mr. Ellis was originally transferred. That course of action was perfectly lawful and open to them in that case, but it provoked an outcry in the Irish Republic, whose Government behaved as if they thought that a speciality rule existed, or ought to exist. The upshot was that the Crown substituted the original offences. As hon. Members will know, Mr. Ellis was subsequently acquitted and transferred back to the Republic of Ireland.

The important point about that case was that it revealed that the Government of the Irish Republic considered that there was, or ought to be, a speciality rule governing the transfer of fugitive offenders from the Republic to the United Kingdom. They behaved as if assurances had been given by the United Kingdom Government that a speciality rule would be applied. Those assurances were not followed through by the magistrates in the Ellis case because, of course, magistrates and the courts are independent. But now we find legislation surfacing in the Bill to give legal effect to the assumption on which the Government of the Republic of Ireland proceeded. Clause 44 appears to have its origins in the protests made by the Government of the Irish Republic arising from the Ellis case in 1991. I should be interested to hear whether the Minister will comment on that assumption.

That raises the question: why have the Government decided to accede to what I presume to be the requests or demands of the Government of the Irish Republic to limit the range of offences for which fugitive offenders returned under the backing of warrants can be charged? Is there some particular reason? Have they come to some agreement with the Government of the Irish Republic? Has there been a deal?

When he considers that question, the Minister may like to reflect on a question that my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) asked the Prime Minister on 21 November 1991 if he would

"assure the House that there will be no further concessions to the Irish Republic in order to obtain the extradition of terrorist suspects to stand trial in the United Kingdom?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"we do not bargain . . . we do not do deals."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 418-419.]

Thus, the Prime Minister appeared to give the assurance in November 1991 that no further concessions would be made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland in order to obtain the return of fugitive offenders. Yet what is clause 44 if it is not a further concession to the Government of the Irish Republic in that connection? We must therefore ask what has happened between November 1991, when the Prime Minister assured us that no further concessions would be made, and today when we see the concessions in the Bill. Why have the Government done a U-turn? Has the Prime Minister done a U-turn, and if so, why?

My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East asked whether there would be further deals. Perhaps there is no deal. Perhaps the Government are just making the concession without there being any undertaking in return. Perhaps the concession has been made in the fond hope that the Irish Republic will respond by facilitating the return of fugitive offenders. It reminds me of other agreements that have been made with the Government of the Irish Republic in the fond hope that they would do something in return for concessions. Those other agreements have proved barren of the product that was promised or expected. We wonder what will happen here.

It might have been better for the Government to have done a deal. Perhaps they should, as a result of this concession, have pressed the Irish Government to get rid of the Extradition Amendment Act 1987 which the Irish Government introduced to try to limit the effect of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. Perhaps the Government should have made efforts to improve the European convention on the suppression of terrorism because it has been clearly demonstrated since 1987 that article 1 of that convention is not effective and draws invidious distinctions about matters such as whether a terrorist is using an automatic weapon or a bolt-action rifle. That can be crucial in deciding whether they can be returned under the convention.

Perhaps something could have been done to curtail the readiness with which district judges in the Irish Republic grant bail to fugitive offenders. Cases have been reported in the press in recent weeks which have drawn attention to that practice. Measures were introduced in the United Kingdom, especially in Northern Ireland, to ensure that magistrates cannot grant bail in cases of terrorist offences. Perhaps we should have put pressure on the Government of the Irish Republic to introduce equivalent legislation to curtail the propensity of their district judges, who are the equivalent of magistrates, to grant bail in such cases.

If we are taking the path of introducing a speciality rule into the backing of warrants, it might have been better to consider the procedure as a whole. A speciality rule is incompatible with the whole concept of backing warrants. The backing of warrants procedure was introduced in the middle of the 19th century to deal with transfers between one of Her Majesty's jurisdictions and another, especially transfers of fugitive offenders from the colonies to England and vice versa. There was no need for extradition and there was no need to question the grounds on which a person was arraigned before the court, because all the courts were Her Majesty's courts. The backing of warrants procedure is an historical survival with regard to the Republic of Ireland, dating from the time when the Republic of Ireland was part of Her Majesty's dominions.

It might be better to have a proper extradition treaty. That would, of course, mean accepting not just the speciality rule, but the prima facie case rule. That would surely result in the Irish having to drop their Extradition Amendment Act 1987 which gives the opportunity for them to refuse to return fugitive terrorist offenders in certain circumstances. In any event, the primary question remains, of what lies behind the decision to introduce clause 44 and thus to negate the Prime Minister's assurance of November 1991.

8.42 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): My heart goes out to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and to his hon. Friends in Northern Ireland as they await with trepidation the introduction of the equivalent of a Criminal Justice Act 1992. At least he cannot complain that on this occasion Northern Ireland is being used as a guinea pig for this country, although if that legislation is imminent, Northern Ireland may be a guinea pig for the changes that we envisage as likely to occur. Like the hon. Gentleman, I welcome the fact that the money-laundering legislation is to be extended by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and his team to the anti-terrorist legislation in Northern Ireland.

When I began practising at the criminal Bar more than 30 years ago, almost all big crime was armed robbery. Now the big crime is commercial—fraud and drugs-related crime. That has happened since the advent of the computer, of cheaper, more frequent and, therefore, more international travel, and of greater international commercial activity. More and more money is made from international and commercial white collar crime. More and more of our courts are preoccupied with such crime, as are the police, the Customs authorities and the lawyers. We now have the Serious Fraud Office, and a fortune is being spent on criminal legal aid in commercial and international crime.

It is vital that confidence in the City should be retained as the City faces competition from other centres. The Government are to be congratulated on promising continued action against international and commercial crime, and on introducing legislation which keeps up our national defences against a very rewarding form of lawlessness and a calculated and vile form of offending against the laws of states.

It is obvious from our debate that the legislation has a number of good features that we all welcome. It is sensible that we are filling in the gaps and correcting the anomalies which have appeared as the courts have dealt with white-collar crime. The guilty inevitably escape through such gaps either because they cannot be charged or because, once charged, they cannot be convicted. It must be sensible to extend jurisdiction to prosecute Britons who have not fulfilled the requirement for the last act in a chain of criminal offending to have been committed in Britain,

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

even though most of the other acts in the chain were committed here. The logic of the existing law defies contemplation.

I am especially pleased that we are paying regard to the work of the Law Commission. I have always thought and have often said here that although that body of fine legal brains labours in our interest, its work ends up as dusty tomes in piles which we seldom seem to implement. The more we implement its careful analysis of the defects of our legal system, the better it will be for all of us. I congratulate the Government on taking up the Law Commission's rendering of the foreign aspects of fraud and similar crimes.

The creation of new offences where the prosecuting authorities have previously found themselves powerless to prosecute on the evidence makes good sense. However, we must be a bit careful about the definitions of such offences and their defences. Under clause 18, it will be an offence not to disclose information if a person only suspects that another is engaged in drugs money laundering. The problem will not be, as the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) suggested, that that will lower the standard of proof. The problem is likely to be that no jury will convict on suspicion alone, so prosecutions will be a complete and utter waste of time and money. We must have regard to that aspect when we lower the hurdles to a point at which common sense is unlikely to sustain any convictions.

I am not sure that I like the defence stated in clause 16(1). It says:

"It is a defence to a charge of committing an offence under this section that the person charged acquired the property for adequate consideration."

Does that protect a barrister or a solicitor? How hard must a barrister work? How long must his speeches be? How long must he be in conference before it is considered by some objective body that his work has been adequate? I assure the House that in some cases I say nothing and I ask no questions. I make a very short speech at the end of the day. Are people to say, "That work was not adequate consideration"? Am I to be charged under clause 16?

I am unlikely—I hope—ever to be charged with any criminal offence, but my example serves to underline the fact that we are becoming somewhat lazy and slack about the way in which we define certain offences, and in that regard considerable alarm and concern has been expressed not only about that provision but about the provisions dealing with insider trading. There is still time to look at those provisions again and see whether we cannot improve them so that absurd situations cannot even be contemplated.

There is good sense in giving the courts powers to confiscate assets where the trafficker has died or absconded. Why should his successor enjoy ill-gotten gains? There is sense in giving the courts power to confiscate further proceeds when they come to light after the trial, within the sensible limit of six years. Why should the trafficker benefit in later years from his ill-gotten gains?

The success of the policy of confiscating the ill-gotten gains of serious criminals—which started with the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 and was extended to other serious crimes in 1988, following a pledge at the general election—has been obvious from the fact that some £35 million has been removed from offenders. That policy may even—we cannot be sure—have deterred some from committing such crimes. However, £35 million is not a very substantial sum to flow from the many cases in which such proceeds have been traced. It is estimated that, in the United Kingdom alone, some £2·5 billion has come from drug trafficking in the past few years. Much more needs to be done to ensure that ill-gotten gains are removed from offenders. In so far as the Bill does that, it is to be welcomed.

The reduction of time waste on petty offences that has been achieved by giving the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office the power to filter out small sums will be sensible and will liberate resources for more important work.

Once a criminal has been convicted by the prosecution discharging to a jury's satisfaction the burden of proof applicable in criminal offences, I see nothing at all wrong with the burden changing to require the convicted prisoner to show on the balance of probabilities that his assets are not the proceeds of crime. As the courts were confused by the wording of the 1986 Act—perhaps I should say, the absence of wording—it is wholly sensible to make the original intention clear.

I would go further. Too much of the expenditure on legal aid comes from the payment of very substantial sums to lawyers defending villains in enormous money-laundering and commercial fraud cases. I have often suggested—no one in authority has ever listened to me—that before legal aid is given in such cases we should ask the accused to accept that his assets will be specifically investigated on the balance of probabilities by a state investigator. We should tell him that if he wants legal aid he must declare all his interests and assets. I can assure my hon. Friends that many such persons will say, "No, thank you—I am not asking for legal aid." They will not apply, trials will be shorter, and 'not guilty' pleas will turn into 'guilty' pleas.

These days, with very long trials involving a number of defendants, there is absolutely no reason why people should not take their chance and sit in the dock for months on end while their lawyers are being paid substantial fees—in the hope that, ultimately, something may go wrong with the trial or that the jury may say, "This poor fellow has been sitting there and nothing much has happened; we want to acquit somebody, so we shall acquit him." That costs the taxpayer an immense sum of money, but we can stop it if we threaten to investigate the total assets and income of any person who applies for legal aid in respect of a serious trial of that kind. I recall that I warned the Home Secretary of the time about previous convictions when we discussed the Criminal Justice Bill in 1991. No one listened. Perhaps some day someone will.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is rather shocking that we should have missed the opportunity presented by the Bill to correct anomalies thrown up by the 1991 Act? Two questions—concerning sentencing matters and unit fines—have been a sharp focus of concern and should be dealt with as quickly as possible in a Criminal Justice Bill. Yet neither of them is addressed in the current Bill. Will it be possible for us to table reasoned amendments in Committee to deal with some of the problems?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Had my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) been able to tear himself away from his many other important and urgent

engagements, he would have heard that point made, and answered, many times during the debate. It is outside the scope of the long title of the present Bill to deal with that problem. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has said—and I welcome it—that primary legislation is not necessary to correct the unit fine fiasco.

As I have been rather unkind to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South—who is an assiduous attender of all debates on this subject and who no doubt had excellent reasons for his absence on this occasion—I should perhaps make the point on his side that the faults of the operation of the earlier Act were already clear when the present Bill was drafted and at the time of its Second Reading in the House of Lords in November 1992. Magistrates, solicitors and judges were already writing to us about the problem, and it is not all that difficult to suggest a solution. It is therefore a valid criticism that we did not broaden the long title of the Bill at the right time and take the opportunity to get on with what we shall undoubtedly do.

I am also pleased that we are dealing with the wholly unsatisfactory situation whereby a court cannot pass a sentence until a confiscation order has been made. Sometimes delays between the sentence and the confiscation order are very long and expensive. There will again be a saving in legal aid when leading counsel, junior counsel, solicitors, old uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all do not have to appear months later to deal with the second part of the trial.

In the other place, the Opposition got worked up about the fact that a prison sentence in default of a confiscation order will no longer wipe out the debt. They seemed to think it monstrous that someone should be punished twice. I do not understand that anger. Crime is not a game. The rules must be fair to protect the innocent and prevent excessive sentences, but there is no reason why money that is ill gotten should ever be held on to—even if a person is serving a prison sentence. I am pleased that good sense has taken hold of the Opposition—particularly the hon. Member for Sedgefield—on that point.

The changes in the law on insider dealing are also sensible and welcome. There is no logical reason why insider dealing with company securities should be illegal while insider dealing with debt securities, such as gilts and local authority stock, should be perfectly legal. I have already commented on the need for improvements in definition in that respect. There is also no logical reason why insider dealing on the stock exchange as an on-market activity should be illegal while transactions conducted elsewhere on a computer are legal. The world has changed and the stock exchange is no longer the only place where such transactions are exclusively made. It is obviously sensible that we should wake up to that.

There is every reason why we should bring our law into line with that of our colleagues in the European Community, so long as they do what they undertake to do and so long as we operate on a level playing field in dealing with our commercial criminals. We shall have to watch that one, too, because there are signs that from time to time our colleagues in the European Community do not do what they undertake to do and leave us looking rather Charlie-like as the only side rigorously fulfilling its obligations.

There is every reason why insider dealers who operate across international borders should not be protected, and provisions in that respect are welcome. The need to maintain international respect for the City of London is very important, because there is so much more competition and because the string of unfortunate experiences over the past few years may have dented that respect. One hopes, therefore, that the anti-fraud measures and the adoption of the banking directives, upon which I shall resist the temptation to address the House, will be very good for the reputation of the City. Those provisions are also very welcome.

Apart from the one or two measures upon which I have commented, I have only two criticisms of the Bill. I dealt with one of those when I responded to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South. He tells me that he was not present in the Chamber because he, like so many of his and our constituents, was burgled. It is important that my hon. Friend the Minister should bear that in mind as we debate a Criminal Justice Bill.

My second criticism relates to clause 1 subsections (4) and (5). I hope that those provisions are never called into effect and that they are never repeated in other statutes. If we give Ministers powers to invent criminal offences without recourse to Parliament, simply through orders, we are going down a very dangerous road.

On balance, the Bill is very useful. I am pleased that the Government are keeping up the relentless campaign against lawlessness, and particularly against the appalling, sickening, drug-related lawlessness. The British people would expect no less. I am also pleased that the measures attract the support of Opposition Members, because the fight against crime should never be a party political matter. I am sorry only that the hon. Member for Sedgefield said, when he began his speech, that there would be no Division at 10 pm as that precipitated a dash to the doors and too few hon. Members have been present in the Chamber to listen to what I think has been a most interesting debate.

9.2 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): After the Home Secretary courteously gave way to me when I asked him about South America and in particular about Colombia and Peru, he gave a very convincing answer about his work and that of his Home Office officials in Colombia. I thoroughly support that. May I perhaps have a letter from him about Peru? I do not blame him for not answering that, but it is a very important subject.

I wish to refer simply to clause 17 and the issues that arise from it. It is one of the Scottish clauses. In particular, I refer to a letter to the Leader of the House from David Johnston on 5 February 1993 in which he states:

> "I understand you are considering problems associated with the Parliamentary device of introducing a report which to all intents and purposes can't be challenged (*Hansard* 28 January 1993: column 1160)."

A criminal inquiry is one thing; what purports to be a criminal inquiry in substance is another. I was one of two people who declined to go before the Nimmo-Smith/Friel committee because I did not understand what a criminal inquiry in substance was. Either a proceeding is a criminal inquiry, or it is not. If it is not, there are different rules.

My instinct was thoroughly justified, as things turned out, in not submitting myself and necessarily confidential information to Mr. Nimmo-Smith and Mr. Friel in the light of subsequent events and the fiasco which surrounded an interview that purported to be from *The Daily Telegraph*. How people conducting what are supposed to

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

be, in substance, criminal inquiries can as a regular habit talk to journalists while they are undertaking those inquiries is absolutely mind boggling.

The letter says:

"As Leader of the House, I think you ought to know I have challenged a particular aspect of the Report of the Lord Advocate's Inquiry into allegations of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. Doubtless others may wish to challenge areas where they have first hand knowledge."

In areas of the Nimmo-Smith inquiry where I have first-hand knowledge, it is very wide of the mark. I must report that there are police in my area who are seething with indignation that they are in the position of not being able to answer something which was put to the House by the unopposed return procedure in circumstances which were an abuse of that procedure.

For the sake of time, I refer to a letter dated 4 February from David Johnston to the Lord Advocate:

"At 17.12 of last week's report of the Lord Advocate's Inquiry it is claimed that I misheard John Simpson in Snatchers Bar.

The implication was my professional incompetence led to a Member of Parliament being misled and, in turn, causing him to mislead the Lord President.

I told Mr. Nimmo-Smith and Mr. Friel that I was so surprised by what Simpson told me in Snatchers that I suggested to Alan Muir at *The Sun* that it would be worth his while phoning Simpson in the bar and speaking to him."

To cut a long story short, that happened. It also happened that—as I understand is its custom—*The Sun* tape recorded a conversation. That tape recording absolutely destroys paragraphs 17.12 and 17.13 of the Nimmo-Smith report:

"Simpson: Well maybe. I don't think he will be now but . . .

Muir: No?"—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he seems to be going wide of the Bill which is under consideration. He may make a passing reference to that matter, but he seems to be dwelling on it in some detail.

Mr. Dalyell: Other hon. Members have gone very wide: I have sat through the whole debate. I shall simply limit my comments to one matter:

"Muir: No? Right. Well, thank you very much Mr. Simpson.

Simpson: Well, remember that if you mention my name, I'll sue you.

Muir: . . . there is no problem . . .

Simpson: But there's . . . you know you're on the right track . . .

Muir: Yeh.

Simpson: There's a lot of things about this one that stink to high heaven.

Muir: Mmm.

Simpson: I mean, I am a totally, utterly straightforward person . . .

Muir: Mm

Simpson: . . . and always have been and there's a lot of things about this case that stink to high heaven."

Of course, I am obedient to the Chair. I put down a formal question to the effect that this whole correspondence should be put in the Library of the House of Commons. That was refused by the Scottish Office Minister who was operating for the Lord Advocate. I wish to register the fact that that is a profoundly unsatisfactory procedure.

On 10 February, a letter came from the Crown Office. As the House will be aware, in carrying out their inquiry and making their report, Mr. Nimmo-Smith and Mr. Friel——

Sir Ivan Lawrence: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There are hon. Members who wish to participate in this debate on the Bill. Time is short, and the hon. Gentleman must know that he can raise this matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. and learned Gentleman has had his turn; he has already spoken for 20 minutes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have told the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that he is going wide of this Second Reading. I now ask him to deal with the Bill as it stands rather than dwell on specific points which he has made in some detail.

Mr. Dalyell: There are few hon. Members as unsuccinct and verbose as the QC, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). Apparently, as QCs become more senior, they think that they can become more verbose. He took up time.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I kept to the subject.

Mr. Dalyell: This is the lawyers getting at it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not a matter of what another hon. Member thinks. I am saying from the Chair that I have given the hon. Member for Linlithgow sufficient scope. He has made his point and I cannot allow him to dwell on it. He must return to the main factors that are set out in the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: Against the background of clause 17, I believe that what happened in Scotland—what is generally called Fettesgate—is a shame-making event in our legal history. I speak on behalf of police officers who have been unable to defend themselves given what the Scottish Crown Office has done.

As I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, I shall, of course, obey you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall leave it at that at 9.10 pm.

9.10 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): This is a technical Bill; for the most part it makes and amends lawyers' law. Much can and will, no doubt, be said in Committee about the details of it and the way in which it might operate. That being so, I shall not enter upon that discussion this evening.

It is no doubt important to clarify the issue of jurisdiction over offences having a foreign element, to deal with technical issues concerning confiscation orders and to tighten the rules applying to dealing on the stock market. I am sorry, however, that the limited parliamentary time that is available to the Home Office will not be spent on dealing with the more pressing concerns of all our constituents in the field of law and order; for example, the problem of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 which has turned our policemen into clerks when they should be out on the beat protecting the public.

Also, as has been said many times in the debate, it is important to tackle the already notorious section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which together with section 1 effectively prevents the courts from having regard to the

criminal record of a convicted person. I well understand that a convicted person can be said to have paid the penalty for the offences of which he was convicted, but society is entitled to say to him, "That may be so, but if you do it again you will be punished more severely."

We should be dealing also with the scandals caused by what I regard as the ill-conceived system of unit fines. I hope that we shall also soon spend time constructing a legal framework for the excellent proposals of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to provide secure education for persistent juvenile offenders. Perhaps we might also find some legislative time to get on with my own private Member's Bill which would reform the law on bail so as to protect our constituents against persistent offenders who commit offences while on bail.

Part I of the Bill before us today would give the courts of England and Wales jurisdiction to try cases of fraud and related offences where there is a foreign element that prevents a prosecution under the law as it stands. I join other hon. Members in congratulating the Law Commission on its excellent work in this area. There are indeed absurdities, as highlighted by the case of Rex *v.* Harden.

I shall give a hypothetical example. If two Londoners happened to be in France for a short time and one persuaded the other to part with property by deception in France, that offence could not be tried in the United Kingdom. It is right that that anomaly should be rectified. On the other hand, if two Frenchmen happened to be in England for a short time and the same circumstances arose, the English courts would have jurisdiction. I believe that the English courts should have the power to decline jurisdiction in such a case. The prosecution of crime is an expensive business, and I see no reason why the English courts should try cases that have no real or substantial connection with this country.

The English courts should also have power to decline jurisdiction where there would be any question of double jeopardy for someone who has already suffered criminal process in another country for the same offence. No doubt the law and practice of extradition in this country will be carefully examined to ensure that that does not happen.

Part III deals with the confiscation of the proceeds of criminal activity. I welcome the fact that confiscation will apply to the proceeds not only of drug trafficking but of other serious crimes. I have no difficulty with the civil standard of proof when applied to confiscation. It is right that the criminal standard—proof beyond reasonable doubt—should apply to the question whether or not the accused person is guilty of the offence with which he has been charged. The Bill makes no attempt to shift or to change that burden of proof in any way.

Having secured a conviction, we proceed to the question whether assets derived from criminal activity should be confiscated. I have no difficulty with the civil standard in that process. Anyone who does not like that standard has a simple remedy—do not commit crime.

There are many causes of crime. One is profit. It is much easier to engage in some forms of criminal activity than to work for a living, as we and our constituents have to do. We must take every opportunity to take the profit out of crime. One particular form of criminal activity—not mentioned in the Bill but of the same genre is pornography—a multi-million pound business about which I spoke at some length in the House on 10 July last year.

The problem there is securing a conviction under the Obscene Publications Act 1959. If a conviction cannot be secured, the Bill's provisions will not apply. The case concerning the book "Juliet" by the Marquis de Sade gives a clear indication that the 1959 Act is wholly defective, because if a conviction cannot be secured on the basis of that book, one cannot be secured in respect of any publication that is alleged to be obscene. We must therefore change the definition of obscenity under the 1959 Act. Meanwhile, we must confiscate the pornographic material—not the proceeds of crime as under this Bill—under section 3 of the 1959 Act, and the civil standard would also apply there. It is right that the civil standard of proof should apply where the confiscation of pornographic material is in question.

We should not be afraid either to take the action which we have in other areas of criminal law—to employ private contractors to seek out offending material, bring it before magistrates, and secure confiscation orders—with the costs to be paid by the pornographers under an award of costs by the court.

Clause 26 gives me cause for some concern, which is shared by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). It is wrong that a person should be convicted of a criminal offence simply on the basis that he suspects that someone might have been engaged in crime. The very least that the prosecutor should be prepared to prove is that the defendant believed that another person had been engaged in crime.

Clause 27 and other clauses provide maximum penalties. Clause 27 provides a penalty of 14 years' imprisonment, but why do we bother to specify maximum penalties in Acts of Parliament when it is clear from the cases that the courts do not come near to imposing them fully? The House must make it clear that, when it specifies 14 years' imprisonment as the maximum penalty for an offence, that is the sentence that the House expects to be imposed for the most serious examples of the crime in question.

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend understand the difference between a mandatory sentence and a maximum sentence?

Mr. Stephen: Of course I do. What I am saying is that the penalty imposed for serious examples of a particular offence often comes nowhere near the maximum penalty that Parliament laid down for it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend think that the matter is assisted somewhat by the fact that the prosecution can now appeal against too lenient a sentence? It has certainly helped in some rape cases.

Mr. Stephen: I do. I wrote an article which was published in 1986 which, together with the efforts of a great many other people, resulted in section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which gave the Court of Appeal that power.

One issue of serious concern to our constituents in the case of offences with which the Bill is concerned and other offences generally is the right of silence, to which reference was made earlier.

[Mr. Stephen]

Under section 2 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987, a person suspected of serious fraud can be required by the Serious Fraud Office to answer questions. Failure to do so may result in criminal penalties.

A person suspected of evading income tax has no right of silence. He must prove that he does not owe the tax that he is alleged to owe. A person suspected of drinking and driving does not have a right of silence. He must give a specimen or pay the full penalty. But a person accused of armed robbery, rape, burglary or murder has the right simply to sit back, arms folded, and say, "Prove it if you can." We must therefore change the law so that the jury can take fully into account a failure to speak in circumstances where an honest man should have spoken.

I have some concerns with part IV which seeks to regulate dealings in stocks and shares. White collar crime is just as reprehensible as blue collar crime and must be punished accordingly. I have no personal interest in the City, but it grew to pre-eminence and contributed vast sums of money to our national revenues from invisible earnings, as it still does, without the burden of the complex regulations that Parliament has visited upon it in recent years.

It is easy to point to consumer benefits. We must, when we consider legislation of this kind, have regard to consumer costs, because the costs of compliance in the City are high. It may well be that our limited resources for fighting crime might be better employed elsewhere.

This is a useful technical Bill which is of great interest to lawyers and accountants, but of marginal concern to our constituents. It needs some discussion in Committee, but I hope that it will pass quickly through the House without taking much more parliamentary time, so that we can concentrate on criminal law matters which are of much greater concern to all the British people.

9.23 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I agree with the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) that the Bill is of limited and marginal interest. It deserves half a cheer. It has been welcomed for what it tries to do but hon. Members have reflected its inadequacy and lack of precision and the Government's failure to demonstrate a real interest in putting right the criminal justice system.

Hon. Members have put forward the complaints of their constituents and the police about the Government's failure to deal adequately with the criminal justice system and have complained about the enormous problems that result. Like the dog that did not bark, the main problem with the Bill is what it fails to do.

One criticism of the Bill is that it has proceeded so slowly to this stage. At the beginning of the debate the Home Secretary said that we should not move too quickly. I think that his comments were based on his experience of how things went wrong with the previous Criminal Justice Bill. He has certainly fulfilled that requirement as it has taken four months for the Bill to reach Second Reading. We are owed an explanation from the Minister of why the Bill has taken so long to reach this stage. Another criticism of the Bill is that it is too narrowly drawn. A third criticism is that it has not been adequately thought through.

When dealing with the problem of drugs and trafficking in drugs, we are confronting one of the major issues of our society today. That point was rightly reflected in the introductory remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). We certainly need to underline the fact that the Government are presently taking appalling risks, one of which is their failure to deal properly with drug misuse, because of the background of the HIV virus and the danger that that poses to many people in our society. Prevention must be properly addressed, but that is not happening. The problen of drugs in our society is one that needs a strategic and comprehensive approach. While the measures in the Bill are to be welcomed, they are a fragment of the provisions that the Government should be introducing.

Given the fact that everyone has referred to the Bill as comparatively narrow, it is ironic that the Home Secretary referred to it in his introductory remarks as a sort of first draft. The Committee that will consider the Bill has an important and onerous job in scrutinising and improving it. However, the Bill should reach Committee with some certainty and as a precise instrument that has been given careful and detailed consideration by Ministers as well as civil servants, following extensive consultation and expert advice. It should not be cast into Committee by the Home Secretary as his first thoughts on the subject. He should not pass major responsibility to his Minister of State to sort out the Bill in the aftermath of the Second Reading debate.

One of the Bill's major omissions, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) referred, as did hon. Members from both sides of the House, is its failure to deal with the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and its shortcomings. My hon. Friend's remarks were cutting and well justified, and I commend his initiative in giving the House the opportunity to put matters right in this Session with thoughtful amendment to the Bill. I look forward to the House being given the opportunity to consider the measure further.

The Home Secretary failed to heed the warnings of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield last October. The provisions could have been included in the Bill. Although the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and others rightly reflected that the Bill as it now stands, and its title, preclude such an amendment, it could have been allowed for initially. This is the second Criminal Justice Bill that has been too tightly drawn and has prevented the House from doing what it should, and making constructive amendments.

During the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, I sought to introduce amendments to help with the prevention of crime and the diversion of young people into criminal activity. As the aim of the 1991 Act, as expressed by the Government, was to reduce the numbers in prison and in custody, one would have thought that measures to improve prevention would have been welcomed. But the Clerks had to advise that that Bill was so narrowly drawn —I think that they referred to it as having an extremely curious geography—that we were unable to make some of the constructive contributions that were and are needed by society. To our great regret, we shall have the same experience with this Bill because it is so narrowly drawn that only the two major issues that it addresses will be open to consideration and improvement in Committee.

I very much regret the inability to see the wood for the trees. It is becoming a tradition among Conservative Members to fail to consult, listen and understand their own legislation. I hope that a lesson has been learned. This

is the third Bill this Session that the Home Secretary has not read in advance of the debate. However, he had the grace to say that he was giving his junior Minister the task of sorting out the Bill in Committee. I suppose that that is at least a welcome step.

Two aspects of the 1991 Act should have been dealt with. One relates to the problems caused by Ministers seeking to interfere in matters that they do not understand. The first of those relates to the figures that the units apply and which have fettered the courts in reaching decisions. Secondly, they have removed discretion from magistrates who have traditionally exercised common sense. I have had experience in the previous system of recommendations for the local bench on motoring fines. The magistrates looked at the outcome of applying the bench's unit strategy and said, "Does this make sense?"

Common sense should be applied in the courts and the 1991 Act was mistaken in not respecting that. I hope that in considering the details of this legislation in Committee and more generally the Home Secretary and his colleagues will accept that courts should have the ability to exercise common sense in dispensing justice.

Another aspect is the ability to consider previous offences. It is important for courts to be able to deal with such offences without imposing a sentence that is totally out of proportion to the offence that is being considered. That is especially relevant to drug offences. A person who continually steals Mars bars is guilty of stealing only those, but the repetition of crimes involving drugs or violence is extremely serious and the court dealing with them needs to recognise the background to the offences.

The Home Secretary said that the intention in Committee is to deal with one omission: to amend the Bill to deal with terrorism. We certainly welcome that but such provisions should have been in the Bill in the first place. We are also worried that the issue has not been thought through. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Minister will deal with that. In dealing with crimes related to drugs, a court is also dealing with the proceeds from those crimes whereas in terrorist cases the proceeds from other offences are used to finance terrorism. That may involve drug trafficking, in which case it would be dealt with by the legislation.

How will the laundering of money to support terrorism be dealt with by the Bill when the offence that creates the relevant funds is highly unlikely to arise from a terrorist offence itself? It may arise from fraud, burglary or armed robbery. Will those offences give rise to the Bill's powers of seizure in relation to drugs? I hardly think so. Is the burden of proof in relation to such offences to be dealt with? Surely not, and in that case how do we tie the offence and the intention to use the proceeds for terrorism to court procedures that are clearly related to drug-related offences but are not clear in relation to the possible application of money for terrorist activities?

The Home Secretary spoke about the success of law enforcement agencies. In response to a question, he said that the quality of drug liaison officers was more important than pouring in staff and money to undertake routine tasks. That is a curious comment in view of the fact that the Bill creates a massive need for money and staff to undertake routine tasks.

I give the simple example of disclosure. Without resources, the provision to force more disclosures of suspect transactions that are referred to in clauses 18 and 26 will be counter-productive. We heard earlier that there are currently about 5,000 disclosures and that in the Metropolitan police area they are dealt with by 21 officers. That has been found to be inadequate in terms of the pressure that is required to deal properly with the amount of information that becomes available.

The Bill will at least triple that amount of disclosure, by a fairly conservative estimate. It is clear that some of the information that will become available will be of lower quality, because it will have been triggered by suspicion rather than belief. We see and welcome the purpose behind the legislation, but there is also a need to boost morale in the police and other agencies by demonstrating that those bodies will have the resources to use it.

The complaint has been made that seized assets do not assist the fight against drug-related crime. Morale would certainly be helped if such assets were directed towards that fight, either through drug enforcement agencies—which, in America, are self-financing—or by preventing the market in drugs, which leads to the trafficking that the Bill aims to prevent.

Surely, Ministers should show not only that they will deal with drug trafficking, but that they intend—as Opposition Members have put it—to be tough on the causes of drug trafficking and drug misuse. It is difficult to see how that can happen, and how disclosure can assist the police materially, given the freeze in police numbers. The Home Secretary referred to the likelihood that the police will have greater freedom to deal with their own resources; one chief constable spoke to me, in a rather jaundiced way, of the freedom to work flexibly within resources that would undoubtedly become increasingly inadequate. That is the experience of recent years. The fact is that we need both the bravery and initiatives of officers in the front line, and the painstaking back-room work that needs time, staff and money—a need that the Bill will increase.

The Home Secretary and his colleagues must realise that the failure to recognise how all parts of the police service need to fit together and complement each other causes immense anger and frustration among police officers, and all who work with them and value their work. The privatisation of security services, with prisoners escaping or allowed to go free—today, a private security vehicle ran into a police car—would be laughable were it not so serious. The privatisation of parts of the police service, which the Home Secretary wants to bring about, would be an even more dangerous and mistaken step. Thank God it is not within the remit of the Bill; otherwise, the right hon. and learned Gentleman might be tempted to introduce it.

There is a need not only for the matter to be tidied up—we shall try to do that in Committee—but for the Government to recognise the strategic importance of providing the police with the resources, as well as the legal means, to deal with the serious problems that we face.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) for his work as chairman of the all-party group on drug misuse. He has referred to many of the problems, and a number of hon. Members have mentioned the undermining of residential facilities for drug misusers. Again, prevention is necessary. Although the Bill and its intention are welcome, they must be part of a range of measures to deal with drugs and similar difficulties.

I was interested to learn that the hon. and learned Member for Burton is not listened to by Ministers either, despite his willingness to provide advice on insider dealing from within the legal profession. Hon. Members on both

[Mr. Alun Michael]

sides of the House have made it clear that the police and the community want the Government to take crime seriously—especially youth crime—and regret the failure of this narrow Bill to deal adequately with such issues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield spoke eloquently of the development of drug use and addiction, and called for deterrents and the proper use of funds. I hope that the Minister will respond to that call. Let me remind him of the need to deal with couriers from Nigeria, thus saving the cost of imprisonment, child care and future personal and social services.

The hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) said that he felt that there was no qualitative difference between white collar crime and other forms of crime. We need to be careful about suggesting that there are no distinctions to be drawn. Offences need to be pursued with the enthusiasm that is appropriate to the seriousness of the crime and its impact on society. In relation, however, to the financial aspects of the Bill, I point to the grave reservations that have been expressed by a number of bodies—in particular by the Hundred Group of Finance Directors on behalf of the largest quoted companies in the United Kingdom which have expressed major concerns over the proposed legislation on insider dealing. They have referred to ambiguities implicit in the drafting of the Bill which they believe are so serious as to result in the legislation hindering legitimate business activities and market practices.

I seek from the Minister now the granting of their request for the guidelines to be issued in time before the Bill is considered in Committee. I hope that the Minister will grant their request. Guidelines would have a serious bearing on the need for amendments to the Bill in its current form. When we dealt with the immigration measure that went through Parliament in 1988, the Home Office continually refused to recognise that draft orders were available but, curiously enough, those orders were published the day after the Bill had been considered by Parliament.

I ask the Minister to give the House an undertaking tonight that draft guidelines will be available before the Committee sits so that members of the Committee can be properly informed and can properly deal with the issues that have been raised in the debate by hon. Members on both sides when drawing attention to the shortcomings of the legislation.

Guidance notes are not enough for many aspects. Some cases have led to desperate difficulties. A finding of guilt can lead to heavy penalties and the loss of reputation. The ruining of a reputation can be extremely damaging. If someone transgresses seriously, it is right that that person should be punished, as the Bill intends should happen. It is also right that individuals should be protected by the legislation. It is important, therefore, in relation both to insider dealing and to disclosure, that there should be proper guidelines so that no individual is in any doubt about what he or she is required to do under the legislation.

It is also important that City and financial institutions should be in no doubt about what they are required to do and that there should be a proper framework for their employees. There should be proper recording of the reporting of suspicion so that there is no danger that, by error, individuals put themselves in jeopardy under the law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North made a thoughtful speech, based upon his experience. I hope that his direct courtroom experience, and also his experience when investigating a major case of insider dealing, will be taken into account by the Minister in Committee. We need to make use of that experience and expertise.

The Committee will need to consider changes to tighten up the Bill. We need clear guidelines for the training of staff. Staff working in the City must be protected. To be effective, the legislation needs to be clear.

The Bill has many failings, but the issues with which it deals are important. Therefore we shall seek to improve the Bill in Committee. We shall endeavour to assist the Minister who has been instructed by the Home Secretary to sort it out in Committee. If the Minister is willing to accept the help and advice that we offer, I am certain that the Bill will be a stronger and better measure when it returns to the House on Report.

9.44 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): This has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate. I congratulate all right hon. and hon. Members on their contributions. I was struck by the low-key appreciation for this measure from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) compared with the much greater appreciation of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). Perhaps a difference of opinion is opening up on the Opposition Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth made particular reference to the provisions on insider dealing and asked whether we could make guidelines available before the Committee stage. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has assured me that, when the clauses are considered in Committee, some of the clarification that the hon. Gentleman seeks will be provided.

I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth chose to make a few cheap comments about the proper attempts of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that the police carry out their duties in the most effective manner and that they are doing the duties that they should be doing. There will be more time to debate that, but I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman had a go at those proper activities.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth asked about Nigerians who have been convicted of importing drugs into Britain. The length of sentence for such offences is a matter for the courts, but it does send out a deterrent signal. The hon. Member for Sedgefield asked whether we had done anything to transmit that information to Nigeria. We ran a poster campaign in west Africa and the Indian sub-continent, making clear the penalties for importing drugs illegally into Britain. That campaign will be renewed in the forthcoming year. The Nigerians display warnings at their airports. We have helped the Nigerian authorities by, for example, training their law enforcement officers, and we have offered assistance to deal with Nigeria's internal drug problems. It is a matter that we take seriously. I hope that those comments help the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield set the tone for the debate by welcoming the Bill on behalf of the Opposition. That has been a common feature of all the speeches. There have been words of regret that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, the Bill was not so drafted as to address the problems that many hon. Members have mentioned with the Criminal Justice Act 1991. My right hon. and learned Friend made our position clear: we have listened, we know what the problems are and, if necessary, changes will be made. I wanted to emphasise that.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield and other hon. Members rightly drew our attention to the size and scale of the drug problem. The Government spend some £500 million per year on the campaign against drugs and their preventive strategy, which shows how seriously we take the problem. The hon. Member for Sedgefield criticised the work of other Government Departments, such as by the Department of Education, but the national curriculum deals with substance misuse. Although specialist staff may not be available in all schools—it is up to each authority to decide whether to maintain that service—such information is available to children under the national curriculum. The Department of Health, too, in the way in which it conducted European drug prevention week, showed how it is contributing to the fight against drugs.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield rightly mentioned the work of the police in drug prevention. He mentioned King's Cross but, sadly, did not also mention the 250 arrests that were made in that operation. The activities of each force, the regional crime squads and the national criminal intelligence service show how all our law enforcement agencies are working together to combat the threat of drugs. Their efforts will be underpinned by the Bill. It is important to recognise that fact.

One of the issues raised in our debate was the Bill's impact on our financial institutions and how financial institutions outside the banks were reacting to the requirements. I draw the House's attention to the guidance notes for banks and building societies issued in December 1990 by the Bank of England. The notes make clear what the financial institutions should be doing not only to prepare themselves for this legislation but to make the working of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 effective.

The fact that about 11,000 reports of information arising from existing legislation have already reached the national criminal intelligence service shows that the financial institutions in this country are already responding to the challenge of the 1986 Act and will not have to change their procedures substantially to incorporate the requirements of the EC directive because it was anticipated in the guidance notes. There is no doubt that the point raised by the hon. Member for Sedgefield is well met by the notes, which I commend to the House.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield and others asked how we were dealing with south American countries in terms of bilateral arrangements to improve, for example, confiscation procedures. Work has been concluded on bilateral agreements with Argentina, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay, and work continues with a range of other south American countries to reinforce our procedures in that respect. Much of the work was pioneered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on his trip to that part of the world—*[Interruption.]* I have to justify why he went. In addition, through our work with the United Nations against drugs, we have given further material assistance especially to countries such as Colombia. We take seriously the attempt to extend the fight against drugs on an international basis.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield also spoke of the problems which he believed were connected with the use of assumptions in the Bill. The nature of money laundering, and of drug trafficking in particular, is a life style offence. It perhaps goes beyond the range of other types of criminal offence, which is why the assumptions—the use of which we make mandatory, as the Bill outlines—are a real and proper requirement, recognising the nature of drug trafficking itself. I think that the House generally agreed with that.

The hon. Member also questioned the effectiveness of existing confiscation arrangements. I should point out that by the end of 1991 3,420 confiscation orders had been made under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. That proves that the legislation is working, as does the fact that the amount of money which has now been confiscated, or which is the subject of confiscation orders, has risen to about £50 million.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield and others also mentioned clause 18 and the nature of the proof required when an offence may be connected with knowing of or suspecting money laundering. Although I understand the concerns expressed, I should point out that the criminal level of proof is still required to sustain such an accusation. Equally, we should bear in mind the fact that at that level the process could well include a large number of people in financial institutions. That means that the prosecution in such cases must be entirely sure of the facts in bringing such a charge. That shows a balance in the way the legislation is framed.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The jury will be told that suspicion is never enough for a criminal offence, so for the jury to be told that they must be satisfied that they are sure that there was a suspicion will be so confusing as to make the provisions impractical nonsense.

Mr. Jack: I know what my hon. and learned Friend says on the subject, but that is a matter for the prosecutors in terms of sustaining the prosecution. Clearly they will know what the evidence is, and on what basis they are bringing the charges. As I have said, a high level of proof is required of the prosecution if the subjective offences are to be sustained. They were indeed the subject of considerable debate in another place.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and others discussed the way in which the proposals will relate to Northern Ireland. Indeed, the powers to confiscate the proceeds acquired by people involved in terrorist-related activities are at present available only to the courts in Northern Ireland. We want to ensure that the money laundering and confiscatory arrangements are kept parallel—I nodded rather vigorously at the hon. Gentleman when he said as much. There must be a basis which extends throughout Great Britain for proposals on money laundering. Equally, as the hon. Gentleman said, both the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Powers) Act will require modification to incorporate those arrangements. I hope that what I have said helps the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned clause 44, which effectively brings into our law what is already happening

[Mr. Jack]

between the Republic of Ireland and this country. The intention is entirely correct in terms of trying to ensure that the extradition arrangements work as effectively and smoothly as possible. I know that there are sensitivities on that matter and I have taken careful note of the hon. Gentleman's words.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the differences between the effects of the Bill, especially part I, on the various parts of the United Kingdom. Those differences are the result of the different legal codes in Scotland, in Northern Ireland and in England and Wales. I gather that the Northern Ireland Office is considering the hon. Gentleman's second question—I want to assure him on that matter.

Many other hon. Members spoke about other matters, especially the insider dealing provisions. I shall try to deal generally with the questions raised, and in doing so I put on record a quotation from "Investor Relations: a guide for directors", produced by the stock exchange. That quotation puts in context some of the fears and concerns that have been expressed in all parts of the House, and illustrates how the existing advice already goes beyond the part of the Bill which relates to insider dealing:

"It is vital that no group of investors of market commentators be given privileged access to price-sensitive information. However, it can often be helpful to provide background information to brokers' analysts who play a key role in analysing published information given to the market, and to major investors or potential investors in the company. This might include both a restatement and elaboration of information already released and material on the company's products and processes which, while not price-sensitive, assists analysts or fund managers in their understanding of the nature of a company's business."

That quotation underlines what my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury said about that part of the Bill representing "business as usual". My hon. Friend has been present throughout the debate and listened to hon. Members' comments, and I know that he will take them into account in the continuing work on the consultations that he, his officials and others are having with members of the financial community, in order to take on board and reflect some of the concerns that hon. Members have expressed in the debate.

Time prevents me from going into many of the other points raised. In the Government's view, this is a wholly benevolent Bill. It will strengthen the fight against drugs so as to ensure that we have the most effective regime to counter those who have sought to profit from money laundering and from drug trafficking. It will ensure that we deal with those people on equal terms with other members of the European Community and that we take our part in the international fight against drugs. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL *[LORDS] [MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(a) of compensation for loss suffered as a result of the making of confiscation orders which are varied or cancelled; and

(b) of grants to such persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate in connection with measures intended—

(i) to combat or deal with drug trafficking or the misuse of drugs; or

(ii) to deal with consequences of the misuse of drugs.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Cane Sugar

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4439/93, relating to guaranteed prices applicable in the 1992-93 delivery period to cane sugar originating in the African, Caribbean and Pacific states; supports the Government's objective of ensuring that prices paid to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries are both in accordance with the terms of the Lome-Sugar Protocol and a level which enables the viability of cane sugar refineries in the Community to be maintained; and supports the Government's intention to press for a radical review of the European Community sugar regime which will produce some deregulatory benefits for the Community's sugar consumers, while accepting a continuation of that regime until 30th June 1994.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Developing Countries

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9910/92, relating to demography, family planning and co-operation with developing countries; and welcomes the Resolution adopted at the Development Council on 18th November 1992, which takes full account of United Kingdom interests in this field.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

RIGHT TO KNOW BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Right to Know Bill it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(i) any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown in consequence of the Act;

(ii) any increases attributable to the Act in the sums so payable out of money so provided under any other enactment;

(b) the payment out of the Consolidated Fund of—

(i) any salary payable in accordance with the Act to the Information Commissioner appointed under the Act; and

(ii) any pension so payable to or in respect of the Commissioner.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [2 April],

That the Amendment to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill set out in the Lords Message of 18th March be referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question again proposed.

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITION

Rail Privatisation

10 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I present a petition that expresses the grave concern of many of my constituents in the city of York and in many other places about the horrendous threat to jobs posed by rail privatisation. The petition reads as follows:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of residents of the City of York and other parts of the United Kingdom, showeth That they wish to protest against the Government's plan to privatise the railways. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House calls for all possible steps to be taken to protect the jobs of those connected with the rail industry in York. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

The petition is signed by David Flintham, the editor of my local paper, the *Yorkshire Evening Press*, by Robert Beaumont, the chief features writer, and by more than 12,000 other of my constituents and people of neighbouring areas.

To lie upon the Table.

Arachnoiditis

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I thank you, Madam Speaker, for granting me this Adjournment debate this evening. You appear to be in rude health. Clearly, the Easter recess has done you good.

This is the first occasion since my arrival in the House on which I have had an Adjournment debate on a national issue. Hitherto, all my Adjournment debates have been exclusive to my constituency. I have two admissions to make. First, I had never heard of arachnoiditis until it was raised in my constituency by the chairman of the Arachnoiditis Self Help Group. I believe that I was in good company, because none of the journalists on the local television, radio or newspapers had heard of it, either.

I understand that arachnoiditis is the inflammation of the delicate membranes surrounding the spine and nerve routes. They become inflamed, thicken and adhere to other tissues, such as nerves. The condition has been associated with spinal infection or injuries, including spinal surgery, the most common of which is for slipped discs. It is allegedly caused by injections to the spine in connection with procedures such as myelography. It was the fact that the Isle of Wight consultant who is responsible for myelographies told our local newspaper that, because of the risks involved, he would not dream of having one himself, that drew the matter to my attention and to that of a number of others.

The second admission that I have to make is that, until I put my back out—fortunately only on one occasion—I did not realise the sheer unspeakable agony of a back complaint. There is no respite from it, whether one stands up or tries lying on a bed or even on a hard surface such as a floor.

I see that the Minister, who also appears to be in his customary rude health, is in his place. I do not know whether he has ever suffered from a back complaint. I have noticed that, since his translation from the Whips Office, he has developed red box stoop but, apart from that, he has always seemed to me to be a bouncy and healthy Minister; but if he has had the unfortunate experience of putting his back out, he will know precisely why I have initiated the debate.

I pay tribute to my constituent, Mr. Ron Sheppard, who is the chairman of the Arachnoiditis Self Help Group. He has worked tirelessly for the cause, and his breakthrough came when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my noble Friend Baroness Cumberlege, wrote to me on 5 March:

"it is possible that any procedure involving puncturing the membrane around the spinal cord could lead to the introduction of harmful bacteria and hence cause inflammation such as arachnoiditis."

I thank my noble Friend Baroness Cumberlege, through my hon. Friend, for cutting through all the red tape and bureaucracy and giving the brave little band of back sufferers the answer straight down the line. That is a triumph for open government.

The first great concern is that people still feel that they are not properly counselled about the risks involved in myelography. My noble Friend continues in her letter:

"In many situations, MRI"—

magnetic resonance imaging—

[Mr. Barry Field]

"will be a suitable alternative to a myelogram. Currently, clinicians have to consider for individual patients the balance between the risks of myelography and the risks of waiting for the availability of an MRI scan. The patient should be involved in this decision through informed consent."

The self-help group has a number of letters from people all over the country who say that they were never properly counselled concerning the risks involved. I have asked the chairman to select a sample to illustrate my point; I am sure that the Minister will take my word for it that I could provide the originals of those letters and many more besides. The first is from the chairman, Ron Sheppard, who says:

"I was never warned of any risk before myelography".

Mrs. Rogers of Sussex writes:

"At no time was I warned there may be side effects".

Mrs. Ince of London states:

"never at any point was I informed of the dangers of the said procedure."

Mrs. Paton of Cornwall says:

"No-one seems to tell you anything".

It has been put to me—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will be sympathetic to the point—that when one is suffering the unspeakable and excruciating agony of this back disorder, one will sign one's life away to anyone who will promise one relief from it. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that point on board and that, perhaps as a result of this Adjournment debate, we will see the introduction of a large, bold-typeface warning about the risks involved in such treatment, to be signed in duplicate by patients, with one copy to be taken away by them and the other to be placed on their file, so that in future there can be no doubt whatever that patients have been properly counselled in such circumstances.

As Baroness Cumberlege said in her letter, MRI scans have an important part to play in the alternative therapy that will be available in future. I understand that, in September 1992, the Royal College of Radiologists issued a report, which is brought to the attention of the Secretary of State for Health personally, estimating that MRI scanner needs of the United Kingdom amount to approximately 225, and that there are currently 90 in operation. I am pleased to say that one is made available regularly on the Isle of Wight, and it plays an important part in the diagnostic health care of my constituents.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, he will no doubt point out that, in 1991, the Secretary of State for Health announced a three-year rolling programme for MRI scanners. However, the problem is urgent, and one reason for this debate is to call for an accelerated programme. Indeed, with fundholding, these matters are being discussed actively with consultants and general practitioners throughout the country. In my constituency, Mr. Paul Bingham of the Isle of Wight health commission published an article in the "Public Health Quarterly" to provoke discussion on the use of MRI scanners in future.

An article in today's *Times* states that my hon. Friend the Minister will announce next week an increase in the limit for regions and national health service trusts from £50,000 to £250,000 for leasing medical equipment and building new developments. Having spent my first Parliament campaigning against the wretched Ryrie rules, I am delighted that, in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I have at long last found a champion for their total abolition. If the article in *The Times* is true, next week's announcement will hopefully be the manifestation of that abolition.

I want my hon. Friend to go further than that. The provision of pound for pound has been an area of great success in the Government. Every £1 raised locally is matched by £1 from the taxpayer's pocket. Such a scheme for MRI scanners would be welcomed by the general public. Many district health authorities already operate such schemes, but if they were encouraged by the Department of Health, that would be a very welcome initiative.

We can all decide which good causes to support, but none of us has a choice about when we are ill. That is why our national health service is so precious to us all. I hope that the Minister will pick up this baton and run with it till we have a result. Such a scheme would accelerate the introduction of this wonderful "Tomorrow's World" technology throughout the health service, and it would be just the kind of dynamic challenge that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health had in mind in involving private financing in the health service.

I have some questions for the Minister. Are there any central records of the number of myelograms being carried out? What more can be done to ensure that GPs are aware of arachnoiditis and so ensure its proper diagnosis? Are there any proposals for looking into alternative pain management to avoid spinal injections? Has the Department of Health considered the work of Professor Jayson at Manchester hospital, who has been researching the condition and is president of the self-help group? Has the Medical Research Council a part to play in considering the problem?

I understand that Ron Sheppard has written to the Select Committee on Health asking whether the whole problem can be examined. I know that the Minister will, as always, be as helpful as possible when he replies to the debate, and that he will do his best to continue that ray of hope brought into the lives of so many sufferers by the letter from Baroness Cumberlege. I hope that my small contribution tonight will encourage those who have suffered for so long, and that I may have convinced the Minister that arachnoiditis really is a pain in the back.

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on his very full and lucid account of the serious problems faced by people who suffer from arachnoiditis. I acknowledge the close interest that he has taken in the matter.

I am only too familiar with the problems facing people with arachnoiditis. I have been made aware of just how great the suffering can be by my constituents and through the Department. Perhaps it would be helpful to hon. Members if I briefly describe it.

Arachnoiditis is an uncommon condition which is characterised by chronic inflammation and thickening of the sub-arachnoid space, which covers and protects the brain and spinal cord. It may develop for several reasons. These include meningitis, suba-rachnoid haemorrhage, tumours, trauma from injury or surgery and irritants, including the contrast agents used in myelography. The condition traps nerves as they leave the spinal cord.

Arachnoiditis at the lower end of the spinal canal may cause a great deal of low back and leg pain, although there is no distinctive syndrome.

Any trauma to the spine, including surgical invasive procedures, may lead in some cases to the development of arachnoiditis. Patients with this condition may have more than one predisposing cause. For example, myelography involves trauma to the spinal cavity to introduce a needle through which a contrast medium, which is an irritant, is injected, and is not uncommonly followed by a spine operation. Epidural injections involve the introduction of a needle to the epidural space. It does not penetrate the arachnoid membrane, nor is a contrast agent injected, but arachnoiditis has been reported following epidural injections.

Myelography is a diagnostic procedure. It involves the introduction of a contrast medium into the spinal column through a needle inserted into the lower spine. Once the contrast agent has been injected, several radiographs are then taken which provide views of the spinal cavity.

Myodil was the United Kingdom trade name for the contrast medium, which was an oily contrast agent for myelograms. It was introduced in 1941. It quickly became the standard contrast medium for myelography until the general acceptance of non-ionic water soluble contrast media during the 1980s. Myodil has not been marketed since 1987, when it was withdrawn from the market by its manufacturers.

Myodil was first marketed in the 1940s and was, therefore, issued a product licence of right when the licensing of medicinal products was introduced under the Medicines Act 1968. At the time of first licensing, the product information warned of the occurrence of post-myelography arachnoiditis in some patients. At the time of the review of the product licence of right, that warning was strengthened. It is the responsibility of doctors who use a product to ensure that they are fully familiar with the benefits and risks of any procedure or treatment.

Potentially, any medicine may cause side effects which may be minor or more serious. The Committee on Safety of Medicines carefully monitors all issues of drug safety and, where necessary, provides advice to doctors, dentists and pharmacists. Prescribing information and advice about side effects is available to doctors in the data sheets of an individual product, which are issued by the manufacturer of the product, and in the British National Formulary which the Department provides to all prescribers.

The incidence of clinically significant arachnoiditis associated with Myodil myelography is difficult to assess but has been estimated to be approximately 1 per cent. However, the relative contribution of Myodil, compared to other factors also known to be associated with arachnoiditis, is less certain.

I am aware that legal proceedings are currently in progress between a substantial number of patients, who claim to have suffered damage as a result of the use of Myodil, and Glaxo, the manufacturers of this product. The Department—in this case the Medicines Control Agency—complied with a High Court Order for discovery of documents relating to Myodil in 1991 but has had no further involvement in the case. My hon. Friend will understand that, in view of the judicial proceedings, I am unable to comment further.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): In a general debate, it is interesting that all three major parties in the House are represented by their Front-Bench spokespersons. The reason for that is that we have received literally hundreds of letters from sufferers of arachnoiditis about the pain they are suffering and their inability to get adequate answers to the issues which have been raised.

On 25 March, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Health about a meeting of departmental officials, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the Secretary of State for Health, hon. Members on both sides of the House and representatives of the action group to see whether we could consider in detail some of the complaints that have been raised about the Department.

I have had no confirmation so far from the Department of an agreement in principle to the meeting. Perhaps the Minister will say before the debate concludes whether in principle the Department is agreed that the meeting should take place and, on that basis, when it is likely to take place.

Mr. Sackville: I can give the hon. Gentleman, and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne), an assurance that we shall arrange a meeting at a time of their convenience.

I shall now make some general comments about injuries sustained as a result of medical treatment. If a patient suffers injury as a result of medical treatment, he or she can go to court to claim compensation. If the claim is against the national health service, to be successful the patient must succeed in proving that there has been negligence on the part of the NHS.

Where a patient suffers an injury as a result of negligent care or treatment provided by the NHS, it is right that compensation should be paid to that patient. However, the individual who is accused of being negligent also has the right to defend his or her professional reputation. Unless the alleged negligent action is so obvious as to be beyond doubt, as in other walks of life, if the injured person wishes to pursue the case, the dispute is resolved through the courts.

In a case such as that concerning Myodil, the Government's position has always been that it is a matter to be resolved between the drug companies and individuals, if necessary through the courts.

Magnetic resonance imaging, known as MRI, is a relatively new method of imaging, which has come into clinical use over the past 10 years. It is a non-invasive technique that enables good images of spinal cavity to be obtained but differs from myelography in not using ionising radiation. In many situations, MRI will be a suitable alternative to a myelogram, but there will be some situations in which myelography is preferable. For instance, some patients are unable to tolerate the enclosed conditions which are a feature of MRI.

There are about 78 MRI units in England—the number has already grown—but these are not sufficient to take on the present myelography work load; so it would not be practical to discontinue myelography entirely. I am glad to remind my hon. Friend that the then Secretary of State for Health announced early in 1992 a three-year programme of capital funding for medical equipment, including whole body scanners. Several scanners were purchased for England in the financial year 1992-93, and we expect that rather more will be acquired in the current financial year.

Clincians associated with treatment of the spine would wish to avoid invasive procedures wherever possible, and consultants would not go along with it if there were always

[Mr. Sackville]

alternatives available. In the context of the current provision of MRI, clinicians have to consider for individual patients the balance between the risks of myelography and the risks of waiting for the availability of an MRI scan. The patient should be involved in that decision, through the process of securing informed consent.

Patients are entitled to receive sufficient information in a way that they can understand about the proposed management, any possible alternatives and any substantial risks. Patients must then be allowed to decide whether they agree to the treatment. This important principle of achieving informed consent has been highlighted in the patients charter.

As part of the recent NHS reforms, hospitals are responsible for providing efficient and effective health services to meet the needs identified by Health Authorities. In this context, and against the background of the imperative to minimise doses of ionising radiation in diagnostic radiology, provider units will decide whether they will make MRI available. Conversely, health authorities as purchasers of health care will decide how best to use their resources in order to meet the needs of their population. If purchasers are not willing to purchase myelography, it is open to hospitals to provide MRI as an alternative.

It is a sad fact that people have been seriously affected by arachnoiditis—the exact causes of which may be uncertain in individual cases. There is no known cure for arachnoiditis, which can result in severe pain, and adequate pain relief should be an important part of treatment. Services specifically for the relief of pain are available in a number of hospitals.

To summarise, any invasive procedure in the spine carries a risk of causing arachnoiditis. Myelography is one such procedure, but an alternative—MRI—is becoming increasingly available. MRI can replace many invasive diagnostic procedures, including myelography, with the added advantage of avoiding ionising radiation. CT scanners were introduced about a decade before MRI and are now readily accessible; I hope that MRI will become similarly more accessible in the future.

I conclude by congratulating my hon. Friend on highlighting the problem and making more people familiar with the word. I take his point that warnings must be issued and that patients must be made aware of the degree of risk, which is uncertain but which exists.

When I started replying to letters on the subject, as a sufferer of back pain myself—although not of severe back pain—I realised how enormously distressing is the condition. It can dominate and even ruin people's lives. I hope that the programme of acquiring MRI scanners will accelerate and that—as my hon. Friend said—hospitals will take advantage of new flexibility in the way that they finance such acquisitions. I hope that the growth in the number of MRI scanners will help more people in future. Once again, I thank my hon. Friend for bringing the matter to the attention of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 15 April 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MIDLAND METRO BILL *[Lords]*
Read the Third time, and passed.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 22 April.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 22 April.

ELECTION EXPENSES

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, That she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid before this House a Return of the expenses of each candidate at the General Election of April 1992 in the United Kingdom as transmitted to the returning officers pursuant to the Representation of the People Act 1983, and of the number of votes polled by each candidate, the description of each candidate, the number of polling districts and stations, the number of electors, the number of postal votes and the number of rejected ballot papers.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Reform

1. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what impact he expects his proposals for police reform to have on the county of Cumbria.

5. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received to date on his proposed police reforms.

9. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his recent proposals for the reform of police authorities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): My proposals would improve the effectiveness and performance of the police forces in Cumbria and elsewhere and thereby improve the value for money that we get from them. I have so far received a few representations from hon. Members, members of the police service and others. I propose to issue a White Paper setting out the details of my proposals before the summer. I will continue to listen to the views of all those concerned with improving the performance of the police service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why should meddling Conservative appointees appointed by the Secretary of State be appointed to the Cumbria police authority when they surely serve only to undermine the authority and the excellent work being done by our chief constable? Has the Home Secretary no faith in local institutions which can make adequate appointments and carry out the responsibilities that the public expect of them?

Mr. Clarke: I do not make appointments to public bodies for which I am responsible on a purely party political basis. The hon. Gentleman's question is indicative of the attitude of many Labour Members. When police authorities are mentioned, all that they can think about is whether they are of their own political persuasion. I have every confidence in the local delivery of police forces. That is why I intend to create stronger local authorities, whose presence will be more visible to the inhabitants of Cumbria. I will also give them more autonomy in handling resources from central Government. I will lift from the shoulders of the Cumbria police authority and others many of the detailed restraints currently imposed upon them by me and by the Home Office.

Mr. Evennett: I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's determination to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the police. However, I urge him to look again at the issue of London. Does he agree that London is different from the rest of the country in many ways and should, therefore, be treated differently in his reforms?

Mr. Clarke: There is a question about London further down the Order Paper which I shall answer. The answer to my hon. Friend's question is emphatically yes. He and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have already

made their views known to me informally about my first proposals. I accept that the Metropolitan police, who cover the capital city and parts of the surrounding counties, are quite different from the rest of the country. I will carefully consider representations about the nature of the new police authority which I propose to establish for the Metropolitan police.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there are a great many people who could be appointed to police authorities could bring a vast range of experience for whom serving as councillors or magistrates is not an option? Will he make it clear when he publishes his White Paper that he is looking not just for people with business experience but for people with experience in running police liaison panels, victim support schemes and crime prevention schemes?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In considering people to serve on a police authority, one must bear in mind that not every man or woman able to make a contribution in that way can also spare the time to be elected to the local county council or to sit in a local magistrates court. People who might want to sit on a police authority should not be judged, as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) would judge them, on whether they are the right party political colour. *[Interruption.]* The Labour party's defence of local authority membership of police authorities is because, all too often, it sees local authority appointments to committees of this kind as a means of party patronage. We are concerned with strengthening the police authorities and improving the effectiveness of the police service. I hope that the Labour party will eventually take a more enlightened view of the undoubted need to strengthen the effectiveness of the police service.

Mr. Martlew: Earlier this year, the Cumbria police force axed four senior police posts and asked the Secretary of State if it could spend the money thus saved on seven constables, but he refused. Will he change his mind today and allow us to have extra police in Cumbria to fight the rising tide of crime?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. He has described the existing situation, and I regard that feature of it as positively daft. That is why, in my recent statement to the House, I announced my intention to change that situation so as to give far more discretion to the local police force to determine how it spends its resources and what balance it strikes between men and resources. We need stronger police authorities with unfettered discretion to handle money in that way and I propose to set them up. It is the normal instinct of the Labour party to be against any reform or change of any kind to any public service. I hope that at least this small detail of my reforms will get the hon. Gentleman's support.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the effectiveness of police reforms in ensuring that the police can combat crime better will be a matter not merely of organisation but of police operational priorities? Is he aware of the Audit Commission report which points out that 20 per cent. of police time was spent on administration and 25 per cent. on non-crime priorities such as traffic management? Should that not be investigated when the reform proposals are being considered so as to ensure that the police are more actively concerned in beating crime?

Mr. Clarke: It is important that we do, and the police service does, exactly what my hon. Friend proposes. We need to be clearer about what the priorities of the police service are, and what the local public expect of it. We then need to reflect those priorities in the disposition of manpower and resources in the locality and to measure performance in meeting the first priorities of the police service. For that reason, in addition to the White Paper that I am producing, I have other studies under way into exactly how we should prioritise the different duties imposed by the public on the police service. The service also needs to be better organised so that it can react to those priorities, dispose of its resources accordingly and then account to the local public and the general public for its performance.

Mr. Blair: Is not one part of an effective police service the provision of an efficient police and prison escort service to and from the courts? In relation to Group 4 Total Security Ltd., which has taken over certain police and prison functions, will the Secretary of State confirm that, in the past few days, not merely have four prisoners gone missing, but at Leicester prison Group 4 turned up with the wrong van and the wrong documentation and then could not get through to headquarters because the line was engaged? Is he aware that in Derby, court hearings have been delayed because prisoners have turned up late, in Nottingham, court hearings have been postponed because Group 4 vans have got lost in the city's one-way system and that yesterday, a Group 4 van carrying prisoners crashed into a police car outside a police station? Is it not about time the Secretary of State took a grip on his Department and the prison escort service and started to run a service with some regard to public safety rather than one that is like something out of an Ealing comedy?

Mr. Clarke: Escorts between prison and the courts are frequently an occasion for escapes. In the contract area of Group 4 alone, last year more than 50 prisoners escaped during escort—an average of more than one a week—but the Labour party took no interest whatever in that. It could not care less so long as prisoners are escaping from public sector workers. Suddenly, when a contract is taken out by Group 4, it pays attention to every crash of every vehicle, every escape of every prisoner and every slip on the paperwork. If we have aroused the Labour party's interest in the quality of the service provided when escorting between prison and court, we shall have made at least one modest advance. The fact is that the Labour party is obsessed simply with whether a driver belongs to the right trade union. Until it can lift its thoughts about the criminal justice system above that pathetic local Labour party executive committee level, it will have nothing to contribute on this front.

2. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to encourage devolved management within the police service.

6. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on his intentions to allow chief constables to manage their own budgets.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said in his statement on 23 March, he intends to give police authorities and police forces greater freedom to decide for themselves how best to spend their money.

Mr. Lidington: Is my hon. Friend aware that local management of police forces has been broadly welcomed in the Thames valley area by the police service and by the general public? Will he and his colleagues press on from that position and ensure that the performance indicators that he and the Home Secretary are now planning can be applied at local area level so that the public know that not just chief constables but area commanders are making proper and efficient use of resources committed to their stewardship?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We want to give more freedom to chief constables and police authorities to deploy the resources at their disposal, and that means devolving responsibility within police forces from headquarters to local units. National standards and objectives will be translated into local objectives which mean something to the local community and by which those local units can be measured.

Mrs. Gorman: My hon. Friend will not be surprised that in Billericay, where we are well known for our dedication to private enterprise and personal responsibility, the chief superintendent welcomes the moves announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but will my chief superintendent be freer of paperwork imposed on him by the Home Office so that, instead of pushing paper, he can be out catching crooks? In addition, will he be able to subcontract out more of his detective work to the Maigrets and Miss Marples of this world?

Mr. Wardle: There will be greater freedom for chief officers to manage—that is the important thing—with much of that delegated to local level. We want to put the nearly £6,000 million a year spent on the police to the best possible use with as little red tape as possible. Where minor functions can be subcontracted, they will be, leaving the basic policing to the police.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister agree that the first principle of a proper arrangement for delegation is to recognise that it is the chief superintendent on the ground who has the best knowledge of the resources required to ensure effective policing locally? If so, will the Minister please stop sending hon. Members such as myself misleading replies about the actual reduction in police officers that has occurred in Greenwich? Will he ensure that the real representations made by local police and representatives of the community are met by a positive response to build up numbers to tackle crime effectively in Greenwich and elsewhere in south-east London?

Mr. Wardle: From what the hon. Gentleman says, I take it that he is in favour of the reform proposals, as it will then be up to the chief police officers themselves in the police authorities to decide precisely what the strength of their force should be within their cash-limited resources.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister explain why, when chief officers have decided that resources should go local and have set up special urban crime schemes, such as those in my constituency in Armley and Bramley, when they have proved to be successful after a year of operation the Government withdraw the funding?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman will already have heard, if he has followed the proposals, that it will be up to the chief police officers to decide precisely how funding will be deployed. If there is a particular scheme on which a chief police officer wishes to place emphasis in any local area, he can so do. It will be up to the chief police officer and the police authority to determine priorities.

European Parliamentary Constituencies

3. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the arrangements he intends to make for the additional European parliamentary constituencies.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): My right hon. and learned Friend is currently consulting colleagues on this matter. Once proposals are formulated, we will consult formally the Opposition parties.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the parliamentary boundary commissioners rightly enjoy an enviable reputation for impartiality? Will he ensure that a similar system is established to create the new constituencies, and give an assurance that twixt the initial announcement and implementation there will be ample time for representations to be made?

Mr. Lloyd: I can assure my hon. Friend on both points. We shall not necessarily use the boundary commissioners to propose the new boundaries, because they are very much occupied with the parliamentary boundaries, but we will want to have similarly independent recommendations for the new Euro-constituencies. We are determined that there will be an opportunity for public consultation, although it will be constrained by a comparatively tight timetable.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister will have seen press speculation that the additional seats will be available on a proportional representation basis in order to secure the votes of the Liberal Democrats for the Maastricht treaty. May we take it that there will be no question of adopting the single transferable vote system, or will the Minister follow the logic of that and tell his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that he should follow it, too?

Mr. Lloyd: I am always sceptical about reports in the newspapers. We will not announce our final proposals until they have been formulated. We will then discuss them with leaders of the Opposition parties.

Mr. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that where areas are distinctive historic entities, such as Cornwall, there is a case for making them Euro-constituencies in their own right rather than the present situation of unholy alliances?

Mr. Lloyd: I think that the basis on which we want to make the new Euro-constituencies is a traditional one. We want Euro-seats of comparatively the same size in terms of population, but taking into account geography and other local connections. No doubt the body making recommendations will bear those thoughts in mind.

Mr. Allen: The Government are clearly afraid that their own Back Benchers will do to the European boundaries Bill what they are trying to do to the Maastricht Bill. Will the Minister take the opportunity to allay the suspicions of the House that the European constituencies will be redrawn not by the independent and much-respected boundary commissions, but by a hand-picked group of Home Office officials, with all the potential for gerrymandering that that allows? With the next European election so close, the House has a right to know when the Bill will be brought before it.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman obviously prepared his question before he came into the Chamber because I have already dealt with it. I said that the new Euro-constituency boundaries would be recommended by an independent body. I also said that we would be discussing the way forward and the timetable with the Opposition parties.

Criminal Justice Act 1991

4. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from magistrates about the workings of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): The representations I have received from magistrates about the Act have covered concerns about the unit fines scheme and matters relating to sentencing under section 29.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that many magistrates in my constituency will be delighted by the assurances given in the House yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that he is prepared to look at the workings and non-workings of the Criminal Justice Act 1991—particularly in relation to unit fining, which appears to be fine in principle but in practice is working more as a punishment for wealth than one for crime?

Some courts are not able to look at the whole career of a particular criminal before passing sentence. It seems that the system is working to protect the very people we are trying to clobber—the persistent offenders. Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that he will look urgently at the possibility of removing the magistrates from the handcuffs that they are currently wearing, so that we can put the handcuffs on the people who deserve to have them put on —the persistent offenders?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend articulates the feeling of many of our hon. Friends about the Criminal Justice Act 1991. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made it clear at the Dispatch Box yesterday that he intends—and he has my full support—to look hard at some of the problems with unit fines and also at section 29. However, may I say to my hon. Friend, with the same vigour as he put his point to me, that I hope that he will ask magistrates to look carefully at the flexibility that already exists under the unit fines scheme, which enables magistrates to meet their criticisms of the present system.

Mr. Canavan: Have there been any complaints about the criminal justice system breaking down after the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr Blair) about the failure of the privatised prisoner escort service? After the fiasco of the so-called Group 4 security system, will the Minister admit that the privatisation experiment has been a failure, or does he intend to tell us that it is all part of the Government's plan to reduce the prison population?

Mr. Jack: Hearing questions like that is like watching the dinosaurs come back to life. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, the fact that prisoners escape is not a new phenomenon, but the dialogue of the deaf opposite did not listen to that salient point. Only now, when a new company running a new and complex service takes over those responsibilities, for which there is a very good reason, do the Opposition take any interest. I ask the hon. Gentleman to watch developments.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that we got the principle of unit fines and previous convictions fundamentally and absolutely wrong? Is it possible that we got it wrong because at that time hon. Members on both sides of the House were obsessed with the change of Prime Minister?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend brings his own particular analysis to bear on how we got ourselves into this particular situation. The Criminal Justice Act had a long run-in, during which people could have contributed to the debate. There was a consultation document in 1988, a White Paper and a long parliamentary debate. Eventually, the House agreed the measure which came before it. It is important now to concentrate on the positive side and on our assurance that we are looking both at section 29 and at unit fines and that, if necessary, changes will be made.

Juvenile Crime

7. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he will take to counter juvenile crime.

Mr. Jack: The Government's measures to deal with juvenile crime will be further extended by the contents of my right hon. and learned Friend's statement to the House on 2 March, which commits us to developing new policies to deal with persistent juvenile offenders.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that the problem is not so much the growth in the number of juvenile offenders as in the number of persistent offenders? In Leicestershire, for example, 28 persistent offenders have committed 2,057 offences—73 offences each—in the past 18 months. It is obvious, therefore, that the courts do not have the power to deal with juvenile crime as they should and that there is no way in which the Government are helping parents, governors of schools, teachers and others to cope with persistent juvenile offenders.

Mr. Jack: The hon. and learned Gentleman's enthusiasm to put his point to us is a ringing endorsement of the contents of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's statement. That is the whole thrust of what the secure training order is all about. It deals with matters connected with education, offending behaviour and training for the outside world. Juvenile crime in the hon. and learned Gentleman's part of Leicestershire is also being combated by our safer cities initiative and by many of the diversion projects, such as the north Braunston

motor project. That is helping to alleviate some of the problems caused by young people and to deal positively with their potential entry into criminality.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are surplus places for juvenile delinquents in special residential schools? Will he amend the secure accommodation regulations and tell magistrates, town halls and parents to send more juvenile delinquents to those special schools?

Mr. Jack: With his usual astuteness, my hon. Friend has been studying the contents of my right hon. and learned Friend's statement. He will have seen reference in it to making various orders with a requirement for secure accommodation to be used. That is certainly something which we shall be considering.

Mr. Michael: Why does the Minister rely on the Home Secretary's statement which looks to the distant future when we need to speed up justice and to intervene earlier with young offenders in particular now if we are to be tough on crime and the causes of crime? As the Home Secretary has admitted that there is a relationship between unemployment and crime, will he persuade his Cabinet colleagues to restore hope to young people and to recognise the impact of other Government policies on them? Will they recognise especially that the way in which the Government are forcing cuts on the youth service will increase the number of idle hands for which the devil will find employment?

Mr. Jack: The reason I rely on the statement is because it is a darn good statement. It was made by my right hon. and learned Friend and I feel that it is important to rely on it. I wholly rebut the hon. Gentleman's allegation that my right hon. and learned Friend made the connection that his question begged. I recommend that the hon. Gentleman reads again the Home Office research by Simon Field in which he will not find a proven connection between individual wrongdoing and the level of economic activity. There is no split between us. I also point out that the hon. Gentleman's question did not acknowledge the work being undertaken by the Department for Education to deal with the relationship between crime, truancy and exclusion.

Mr. Hawksley: Has my hon. Friend had time today to read about the case of the 17-year-old who was before the courts yesterday in Birmingham and found guilty of attending the stealing of a car with a young girl who was killed? Does he realise that that youngster was already on bail for the offences of rape and kidnap? What are we going to do to ensure that such people are not allowed out to endanger lives in future?

Mr. Jack: We very much understand the strong feelings on the subject of bail. A great deal of work is being undertaken to reconsider not only our policies in that connection but the effectiveness of the working of the bail system. It is very important that, for example, our bail study information groups come up with recommendations to improve the quality of the bail decision-making process. I very much understand my hon. Friend's point.

Security Services

8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will reply to the Home Affairs Committee's first report of Session 1992-93 on accountability of the security services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government will publish their response shortly.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Home Secretary aware that we hope that he will accept the recommendation of the Home Affairs Select Committee that the security service should be subject to proper parliamentary scrutiny? If other countries, no less democratic than our own, have decided over a period of time to have such scrutiny, why should this country be an exception? Is it not the case that the sooner the security services are subject to proper scrutiny, the better it will be?

Mr. Clarke: I gave my views to the Home Affairs Select Committee and they have not changed from those in the evidence that I then gave. The important issue of parliamentary accountability will be dealt with again by the House when we debate the Bill relating to the secret intelligence service and GCHQ, which the Government have announced they intend to introduce in due course. We shall then have a proper and serious debate about how the security service can be subject to some accountability without damaging its operational effectiveness.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that we already have a commissioner for the security service for which I am responsible and he has just produced a report for this year. There is also a commissioner who regulates our use of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. I commend both commissioners' reports to the hon. Gentleman because they, like me, are satisfied that the security service is acting only for the purposes for which it is intended to act and within the strict legal constraints that legislation places on it.

Crime (London)

10. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss the level of crime in the capital.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet the Commissioner.

Sir Michael Neubert: Can my hon. Friend confirm that he is aware of the concern of my constituents and many like them about the relatively small number of criminals who are caught and charged and, of those who are apprehended, the less than satisfactory number who are convicted and adequately sentenced? Can he give my constituents some reassurance that the challenge of crime will continue to be tackled with the vigour and rigour that it demands?

Mr. Wardle: I understand the concern that my hon. Friend expresses; no doubt he will be pleased to hear that Operation Bumblebee—[HON. MEMBERS: "Bunglebee"]. Operation Bumblebee, which is a very successful operation, has recently been launched in the Romford area. My hon. Friend will also be aware that sector policing is proving successful in the Romford area, and no doubt he will welcome the fact that there is a dedicated

anti-burglary squad there, too, whose clear-up rate is better than the metropolitan average. No doubt he will also welcome the fact that 6,000 uniformed posts have been added to the Metropolitan police since 1979.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister appreciate that he has already devised a new name for Group 4? Leaving that aside, does he agree that the best form of crime prevention in London is that devised by local authorities working in co-operation with the police, which will take place only if we have a proper accountable police force in London under local authority control, such as exists in all other local democracies? Why are the Government the only people now holding out against that proposal?

Mr. Wardle: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the answer is more local authority control he should realise that that would simply lead to a whole lot of political posturing. He ought to await eagerly my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals for a new police authority for London which will genuinely increase accountability and support the work being done by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Sir John Wheeler: Will my hon. Friend confirm that when the Home Secretary meets the new Commissioner of the Metropolitan police he will ask him to ensure that there is a clearly stated policy within the Metropolitan police area for the control of burglary and auto crime, and that the small minority of offenders who persistently commit large numbers of such offences is targeted?

Mr. Wardle: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will discuss that priority with the Commissioner. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) will also appreciate that the new Commissioner has set out plans to release 700 officers from headquarters unit out into local units within Greater London in order to tackle precisely the problems that my right hon. Friend describes.

Police Authority (London)

11. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the proposed police authority for London; and if he will make a statement.

14. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future political control of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have already received representations about that subject from a large number of hon. Members. As I announced on 23 March, I propose to establish new police authority arrangements for the Metropolitan police. I will develop my proposals in more detail over the next few months and set out more details when I publish my White Paper.

Mr. Carrington: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the size and complexity of London means that the Metropolitan police have to be controlled differently from the way in which other police forces are controlled? Does he accept that, however unsatisfactory it may be for the Metropolitan police to be controlled by the Home Office, the establishment in London of a police authority along the lines of police authorities elsewhere is not the solution?

Mr. Clarke: I think that London needs a police authority and that the arrangement whereby the Home Secretary is in theory the police authority for London is not adequate if we are to hold the Metropolitan police to account, as happens with other police authorities, and if, as I have said in answer to previous questions, we are to assist them by giving clearer guidelines on priorities and so on. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is no good regarding the Metropolitan police force as if it were just another provincial police force. It is much bigger and has many special duties connected with being in the capital. It certainly should not simply be handed over to local government as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) suggests. Considerable thought about the sort of police authority that London needs is necessary.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us feel that there was far too little consultation on the matter before he announced his proposal? We feel that greater London has special problems—it is the seat of government and has a huge diplomatic community—and special arrangements should be made for it, but we remain to be convinced of the need for the new proposals.

Mr. Clarke: With respect to my hon. Friend, the purpose of making the statement was to have a consultation process and to listen to the views of my hon. Friend and of many other people who have an interest in the Metropolitan police service. In modern times, the Government spend their entire time consulting on proposals, which is a good thing; I have no doubt that in the end it tends to improve the quality of decision taking. We are getting so used to leaks, guesses and misreporting in the newspapers that it is thought quite improper if the Minister ever says anything by way of announcement of intentions without having talks with the world and his wife about it first. I have now put out my proposals for consultation and I will set them out in more detail in the light of what my hon. Friend and others have already said to me when, in the summer, I produce a White Paper that will pave the way for further discussions.

Mr. Tony Banks: Many of us welcome the proposals by the Secretary of State for a new police authority for London, although we would clearly wish to go that much further than he. Nevertheless, it is a welcome step. Can he tell the House his thoughts so far about the basis on which elected councillors will go on to the police authority? Since he did not answer the question when he made his original statement, what thoughts does he have about the future of the City of London police force within the compass of the new London authority?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman and I are agreed that London needs a police authority and that it is time to change the arrangements whereby the Home Secretary is the police authority. Remembering the hon. Gentleman's record on the Greater London council and the many things that he has said about police over the years, I very much doubt that it will turn out that we agree on anything else at all on this subject. I am now considering the membership of the police authority and listening to all views from all sides, and I will announce my proposals in more detail when I produce the White Paper. I have no proposals to make at the moment about the City of London police.

Mr. Maclennan: Recognising that the Home Secretary's authority has not always covered itself in glory in protecting members of the diplomatic community and the royal family in the past, can he assure us that further contracting-out groups such as have been active earlier this week in safeguarding prisoners will not be given responsibility for either the diplomatic community or the royal family?

Mr. Clarke: I am happy to have the opportunity to assure the hon. Gentleman that I have no intention whatever of contracting out or placing in private hands fundamental police duties that require the powers of a constable. Reports to that effect in the newspapers are completely wrong. I do not believe that it is a proper use of a trained police officer to sit in a taxi handcuffed to a harmless prisoner who is being conducted from prison to a court, which is what most court escorting services amount to.

At the moment, under the old arrangements, large numbers of prisoners appear to escape, and the present rate of escape is not out of the ordinary. I hope that we shall make the service more effective by concentrating on its provision by a specialist service. I also trust that we shall release police and prison service manpower for more important duties—tackling crime and looking after prisoners.

It is absurd for the Liberals to join the Labour party in its obsession with saying that the most trivial tasks of a policeman or a prison officer must continue to be done by a public sector employee because that is what the public sector trade unions keep demanding.

Unit Fines

12. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the workings of the unit fine system; and if he will consider proposals for change.

Mr. Jack: We are monitoring the operation of the unit fine scheme carefully. We are taking very seriously concerns expressed about the working of the system in certain cases, and are considering how these concerns can best be met.

Mr. Steen: I wonder whether the Minister has heard the story of the little 83-year-old lady who lives on her own in south Devon and who inadvertently forgot to renew her television licence. She was fined £800 and eight units, because she had a disposable income of more than £5,000 a year. In the same court, a younger woman who committed exactly the same offence and who had a disposable income of under £5,000 a year was fined eight units and only £32. While Conservative Members are entirely for change for the better, we are opposed to change for change's sake. Can the Minister tell the House today that he will make some improvement that is more equitable, which Conservative Members will support entirely?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution to the debate on how we might study and improve the operation of the unifying scheme. He was kind enough to bring to the Home Office some of his local magistrates who made a singular and helpful contribution to our discussions. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), magistrates make the decision in assessing the value of units; it is a judicial decision. If there is information that they wish to question, they have the right so to do.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Why does not the Minister recognise the depth of feeling among magistrates about the unit system? It is undermining the discretion of local justices and leading to absurd fines. Recently in Gwent, a young unemployed youth was fined more than £1,000 for dropping a crisp packet. Although we may condemn litter louts, that seems a bit out of proportion and brings the whole system into disrepute.

Mr. Jack: On 4 May, we shall meet the Magistrates Association which will give it an opportunity to join in our work. The case that the hon. Gentleman mentioned resulted from somebody not filling in the means inquiry form. In those circumstances, an individual, under present arrangements, can go back to the court and ask for the matter to be reconsidered.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Prime Minister agree first, that the supply of weapons to the states of the former Yugoslavia should be choked off and not increased and secondly, that arms and equipment dealers who may wish to dabble there, and their friends, no matter how well connected, will not find a safe haven in Great Britain?

The Prime Minister: The whole House views with dismay and despair the slaughter in the whole of Bosnia which we see daily on our television screens. For that reason, we have sought over the past few months, not least at the London conference and in a variety of other ways, to play our part in the international community in trying to bring an end to that particular conflict. I share the hon. Gentleman's view about the need to damp down and not to increase the supply of arms.

Q2. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Staff for calling a strike for tomorrow and on other days which will be damaging to passengers, especially my constituents, and which could put in danger other people's jobs? What would my right hon. Friend do if his transport spokesman backed the strike? Would he back him or sack him?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the latest strike by the RMT will cause further hardship to the travelling public and that it will damage British Rail's finances. That does not safeguard jobs in rail or elsewhere; it actually puts jobs

in rail and elsewhere at risk. It is an utterly pointless strike. It is a throwback to the 1960s and it deserves the support of no one. It certainly does not have my support and it does not have the support of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I regret that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) supports the strike. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition does not and I hope that he will take appropriate action.

Mr. John Smith: The right hon. Gentleman will recollect that just before Easter, he assured me during Prime Minister's Question Time that the Government were prepared to widen and to intensify sanctions against Serbia. In view of the appalling slaughter at Srebrenica, will the Prime Minister tell us what action the Government have taken since then?

The Prime Minister: I certainly stand by the remark I made to the House before Easter. We are keen both to widen and to deepen the sanctions against Serbia. To do that we need the complete support of our allies in the Security Council and elsewhere. I expect that a suitable resolution will be passed in the United Nations this month, but I cannot guarantee in advance of that the support of all other members, which is necessary to ensure that we have that resolution. The British position is clear. We wish to have that resolution as speedily as possible. We should have welcomed it today.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister recognise that even the existing sanctions are not being enforced adequately so that there is no real let or hindrance put upon the Serbs and their present barbarous behaviour? Instead of the Security Council resolution being delayed until towards the end of the month, ought not the British Government be urging that it be brought forward so that the international community can take effective action?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated delicately to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, that is the position of the British Government, but we would not get it through the Security Council at this moment for reasons that the right hon. and learned Gentleman can well understand. One of the permanent members would not be likely to support it now, but will be later this month. I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows who and why.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that there is really deep anger and concern in Britain about the fact that the slaughter at Srebrenica is a daily affair? Ought there not to be more urgency than this leisurely diplomatic pace?

The Prime Minister: Let me say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that neither he nor anyone else has a monopoly of concern or conscience about the matter. His concern is shared throughout the House and the country. No one doubts that. The question at issue is what we can do, how best we can do it and what options will most successfully help to bring an end to the slaughter. In achieving that, we need the support of the other members of the Security Council and the international community. We have been seeking to obtain it for a variety of measures and we shall continue to do so. In the meantime, the right hon. and learned Gentleman will need no reminding of the leading role that Britain has taken in providing humanitarian aid and in the search for a diplomatic settlement. We were the first nation to put a substantial number of troops into Bosnia and to help people facing great difficulties through the winter.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, contrary to the advice of the armchair generals and pseudo-defence experts, all suggestions of substantial military action in the Bosnian region should be totally resisted as in that terrain it would lead to guerrilla warfare and substantial loss of life among British service men and women and those of other countries, and would make no contribution whatsoever towards an early resumption of peace talks and a settlement of the problem?

The Prime Minister: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes and agree with him. We are seeking a diplomatic means of ending the fighting. That is the only credible way forward for the international community. Other issues have been considered and discussed, but they involve substantial disadvantages. Many of them were cogently set out to the House yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Ashdown: The key question is whether Her Majesty's Government are prepared to see Srebrenica fall into the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has shared for a long time the concern that everyone in the House feels about the issue. What he has never done is suggest a way—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."]—I will answer the question in my own way. The right hon. Gentleman has never suggested a way in which we could physically prevent military action. If the right hon. Gentleman is saying that we should put British troops on the ground in Bosnia, will he please say so directly or stop implying it?

Mr. Roger Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the respect of the public and parents for the teaching profession was not enhanced by the conduct of certain people at the National Union of Teachers conference last week, and that the proper way to restore public confidence in the education system and testing is the Government's review and not a campaign of sabotage?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. The concern that we have in education policy is to improve the quality of education and the success of all our children as they go through their schooling. I believe that the remark of the president of the NUT that the union's aim was "to annihilate the tests" was a disgrace. I hope that no right hon. or hon. Member in the House will give any houseroom to that sort of attitude.

Q3. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: Is the Prime Minister aware of the increasing concern among the lower paid and many other people about the proposed increase in domestic fuel prices from April 1994? If so, what advice would he offer to those people who face massive bill increases in the winters of 1994 and 1995? Would he advise them to leave the heat on, turn it down or switch it off?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have made it clear on a number of occasions that we will provide substantial extra help for people in particular need; we will announce the details of that in good time and the increases will take effect before any increases in the fuel charges. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman might give me a straight answer at some stage as to whether he agrees with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) when he called for an increase in value added tax.

Q4. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: Bearing in mind the importance attributed to manufacturing by many, if not all, people, does my right hon. Friend recollect that manufacturing output fell under the last Labour Government, whereas, during the 1980s, Britain enjoyed the fastest growth in manufacturing output of any major European country and that manufacturing productivity in Britain during the 1980s rose faster than in any other major industrial country in the world? Do recent figures show that conditions are now in place to resume and build on that progress in the 1990s?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend clearly knows, the figures released yesterday show manufacturing output sharply up. They underline the fact that our manufacturers are taking advantage of the present opportunities. I very much welcome that. We need a strong and successful manufacturing industry. What we need to see is an industrial renaissance, not the propping up of lame ducks. The fact that we now have the lowest interest rates in the Community, very low inflation and a competitive exchange rate gives our industries and our exporters in particular every opportunity of growing, investing, expanding, and seeking and achieving success in the 1990s.

Mr. Hardy: The Prime Minister mentioned tests. Does he accept that the testing of English proposed for this year is so outrageously flawed that not only the test should be withdrawn but the present direction of the Department for Education should be withdrawn as well?

The Prime Minister: I do not agree with the principle behind the hon. Gentleman's question. I think that there is no doubt that the tests are the key to raising standards, as our main competitors around the world have shown. It is a straightforward matter of common sense. Without tests, teachers cannot identify pupils' weaknesses and cannot tackle them, parents cannot hold schools to account for their children's progress and the Government would not know what was happening in the schools. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Opposition Members do not find the importance of education and tests a matter for seriousness.

The National Institute for Economic and Social Research found that, at middle and lower ability, pupils in England learnt less than their contemporaries in France, Germany and Japan. That cannot be satisfactory to us and it cannot be satisfactory to teachers. It is vital that we have those tests so that we can identify those weaknesses, find out what the children have not understood and have not learnt and then take action to put it right. Hiding those tests and the results of them is no way to help our children in schools.

Q5. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Against the background of the scandals surrounding the European bank for reconstruction and development, and persistent reports of fraud involving the common agricultural policy and other European funds, is it not a matter for congratulation that the British Government, at any rate, have made a high priority of proper discussion of, and attention to, the reports of the European Court of Auditors? Will my right hon. Friend read up on his efforts in that direction? In particular, when he has a chance to have a word with Chancellor Kohl will he ask him why the Germans are not so keen as we are on discussing this sort of fraud?

The Prime Minister: There is no doubt that the United Kingdom has taken the lead in action against fraud both in the agreements that we reached at Maastricht and on other occasions when European leaders have met. We have done that in the past and we will continue to do that in future.

Q6. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: Despite the Prime Minister's boasting about the engineering industry, has he not seen the Engineering Employers Federation report published today which suggests that engineering imports will rise twice as fast as exports? How will that balance of payments crisis help the country? Does it not once more show how far engineering manufacturing industry has declined due to the mismanagement of the economy by his Government?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman is right about that. He needs to concentrate, as we are concentrating, on the opportunity that we have to expand and improve the industrial and manufacturing base as a result of the policies that we put in place, which are now clearly becoming successful. I regret that Opposition Members do not like that success, but it is becoming more evident week after week.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 19 APRIL—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 21st day.

TUESDAY 20 APRIL—Opposition day (11th allotted day). There will be a debate described as "Bringing stability to the nation's schools" on an Opposition motion.

Proceedings on the Charities Bill *[Lords]*, the Clean Air Bill *[Lords]* and the Radioactive Substances Bill *[Lords]*, all of which are consolidation measures.

Motion on the Financial Provisions (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 22nd day.

THURSDAY 22 APRIL—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 23rd day.

FRIDAY 23 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 26 APRIL—Second Reading of the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. Does he recall that on several occasions lately we have pressed him for the defence estimates debate—a debate which has not been held for two years? He will recall that just before the recess the issue was raised with him at business questions. That was most unfortunately followed speedily by the Ministry of Defence publishing a written answer in which some redundancies from the Navy were announced. The conjunction of a request for a Navy day debate and the defence estimates debate with such an announcement was most marked and will cause great anger on both sides of the House, so may I remind the Leader of the House of the need for both debates?

May I also remind the Leader of the House that we still have no undertaking from him or his colleagues about the debate on public expenditure. The issue to which my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) has just drawn attention—the forecast of the emergence of a twin deficit, with growing deterioration of the trade gap—highlights the implications of public expenditure and makes the need for that debate all the more urgent.

May I further press the Leader of the House for a full foreign affairs debate, in the light not only of the situation in Bosnia, apart from the military implications, but of the deteriorating situation in South Africa? May I remind him also that we seek a debate in Government time on the stocktaking in Scotland.

Mr. Newton: Hon. Members have become familiar recently with that type of long shopping list from the right hon. Lady. She did not add the only one that I have been able to meet this week, which is the demand for an Opposition Supply day. Given that I have again proved my desire to be helpful by putting that in the programme for next week, I hope the right hon. Lady accepts that I remain anxious to be as helpful as I can on as many as possible of the subjects that she raised. But I cannot hold out the immediate prospect of providing everything she wants.

I note particularly the point the right hon. Lady made about the defence estimates, although I assure her that there was nothing sinister in the coincidence of the different statements to which she referred.

On the subject of public expenditure, I reiterate the point that I have made several times, that, as I announced today, we are about to embark on debating the Finance Bill. I imagine that some of the issues that she has in mind will, subject to the decision of the Chair, be in order in the course of those debates.

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): Will my right hon. Friend find time soon for a further debate on the social chapter so as to expose the sham of the position of the Labour party and those who claim that the social chapter would be good for British business?

Mr. Newton: The House will be aware that the Chairman of Ways and Means has provisionally selected new clause 75 to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which provides for just such a debate as my hon. Friend is seeking on the social chapter, following the passage of the Bill. In view of what my hon. Friend said, it may be sensible for me to announce that the Government think that a debate of that kind would be a sensible proposition. It may be helpful for me to say that, if that debate takes place, as may happen next week, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will indicate the Government's willingness to accept that new clause.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Despite the desire of the House occasionally for masochism, if, as seems possible, next week's debate in Committee on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill finishes before the end of Thursday, will the Leader of the House consider providing time to debate whether we should support or oppose the European Community proposal for a carbon tax, given that Energy and Environment Ministers will meet on Friday of next week?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request. I cannot promise to accede to it should the contingency arise, but I look forward to his help, which I took was implied in his question, in making sure that rapid progress is made on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): In view of the fact that the most serious of all European events at present is taking place in the Balkans and that we have never had a full day's debate in Government time devoted exclusively—I choose my words carefully—to the war in the Balkans, may I ask my right hon. Friend to think again and provide a day next week, or at least firmly promise a day the week after?

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I cannot give that specific promise, though it is fair for me to remind my hon. Friend, whose concern in these matters is well known, that I have on at least one occasion that he will remember well—perhaps that is why he was choosing his words carefully—gone out of my way to provide him with a substantial opportunity to take part in a debate on those matters. Also, I readily arranged yesterday with the Secretary of State for Defence for a full statement on Bosnia, which again gave my hon. Friend an opportunity to give some of the important views that he holds on the subject.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): Will the Leader of the House find time for the House to discuss

the powers of the DSS, especially to provide children with grants for school uniforms? I ask that in the light of the position in Wolverhampton, where the right hon. Gentleman's Conservative colleagues running the council have found in necessary, despite spending at the cap, to withdraw grants from children in need. Requests referred to the DSS have been refused because the DSS says that it does not have power to make such grants. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that state of affairs ill becomes the Conservative party's view of Britain being at ease with itself? It smacks more of words than actions.

Mr. Newton: The Secretary of State for Social Security will be answering questions within the span of the statement to which I referred—on Monday 26 April—and I shall draw his attention to the fact that the hon. Gentleman may have a point to raise with him.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for the appropriate Minister to make a statement to the House about tendering procedures in the national health service? Is he aware that, in Macclesfield, Mediguard Services Ltd. has lost its contract to Pall Mall Services Group Ltd. and that as a result, due apparently to some EC regulation, the employees of Mediguard are being denied their rightful redundancy pay, and some have been taken on by the new contractor at lower rates of pay? Is that the caring face of Conservatism in which we on this side of the House believe?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my hon. Friend does not expect me to comment off the cuff on the circumstances that he described, but I will bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): If the Committee stage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill is completed before the commencement of business next Thursday, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that the Report proceedings will not commence without a proper interval after the completion of the Committee stage?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman's question interrelates with that asked earlier by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). If the European Communities (Amendment) Bill completes its Committee stage on Wednesday, it is rather unlikely that I would expect it to proceed to Report on Thursday.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on remedies available to the courts for the treatment of violent young offenders? My right hon. Friend will no doubt have seen national publicity about an elderly pensioner, a constituent of mine, who will be 100 years of age on Sunday and who was savagely beaten up by a young thug earlier this week. Does he agree that remedies presently available to the courts are unsatisfactory and urgently need reviewing? Is he aware that my constituents and many people throughout the country believe that corporal punishment ought to be available to the courts to use in appropriate circumstances, but that they are prevented from imposing it by the European Convention on Human Rights so enthusiastically signed by the Labour party?

Mr. Newton: Unhappily, I was unable to be present at Home Office questions earlier, but I would be surprised if similar issues were not raised then. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is well aware of national concern, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) will know that my right hon. and learned Friend is working on new proposals for dealing with juvenile offenders, and I am sure that he will take note of my hon. Friend's points. I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will want to express their horror at that appalling crime against a very elderly lady.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I note that a Northern Ireland order is to be considered next week. Can a statement be made on the delay in forthcoming Northern Ireland legislation? I have been a member of the House for 11 years and have been waiting for something in the nature of a children order all that time. A roads order is coming, and we have been pressing since 1983 for a residential parking order, which we are told cannot be introduced.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a statement, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is due to answer questions in the House today week.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend will not be surprised if I ask why no time has been made available next week for the Report stage and Third Reading of the National Lottery etc. Bill. Surely the House is overindulging itself with the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. The Committee stage of the lottery Bill was completed six weeks ago today, and my right hon. Friend may be aware that the Government are advertising the appointment of an adviser to the Department of National Heritage. Surely it is time to put the rest of the bricks in place.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern, which he has assiduously expressed on several occasions during recent business questions. I do not accept that the business that I have announced could be described as over-indulgent, for I am sure that the House wants to make progress with the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. I seriously note my hon. Friend's concern, and perhaps I may more light-heartedly take his as a further suggestion for business that could be considered on Thursday, were time to become available.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): This autumn the Chancellor will introduce a so-called integrated Budget. That decision has never been debated in the House and the proposal is less progressive than it looks. Surely the House should have an opportunity to discuss such an important change in our financial control arrangements.

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman may be wrong in saying that that has not been debated in the House, but it would certainly have been before my time as Leader of the House. As I told his right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), I would have thought that it might be possible for the hon. Gentleman, subject to your discretion, Madam Speaker, to make observations on that matter during the debate on the Finance Bill.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): It will be clear to my right hon. Friend from questions today and yesterday that an increasing number of hon. Members are dissatisfied at the stance of the western powers on Bosnia. May I again

[Mr. David Nicholson]

press my right hon. Friend for an early debate on the apparent ineffectiveness of sanctions and diplomacy in dealing with evil murderers and systematic rapists?

Mr. Newton: I well understand the concern in all parts of the House about what is happening. That is why I arranged for a statement yesterday and no doubt why many of today's exchanges with the Prime Minister also focused on the issue. I do not in any way dismiss the concern of my hon. Friend and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who raised the matter earlier. However, I cannot add to what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South about further debate.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In view of the growing concern throughout England and Wales about the potential threat to public health from the growing number of disconnections by the privatised water companies, would the Leader of the House find time for a debate on debt and disconnection in the water industry before Scotland suffers the same disastrous consequences of privatisation that we are experiencing in this country?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to provide time for such a debate, nor do I see how it could be in order on the Finance Bill—on which I have fallen back once or twice in the course of questions. I shall make sure that the hon. Lady's point is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friends to whom it should be directed.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Can my right hon. Friend find an early opportunity to discuss the defence estimates and the Royal Navy? He may be surprised to know that three quarters of my constituents are affected by moves away or redundancy which will cost the Exchequer an additional £800 million that will not be repaid this century by any sort of savings. The House needs to look at the defence estimates, which seem to be going up, despite the number of people who are being made redundant.

Mr. Newton: I note that my hon. Friend has come in behind, as it were, the right hon. Member for Derby South (Mrs. Beckett) on a matter that is undoubtedly important. I shall certainly seek to find time for it when I can make an opportunity available. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the extremely vigorous and energetic way in which he has represented the interests of his constituents in these matters for a long time.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On the subject of the Finance Bill, and given the importance of the oil tax changes that were proposed in the Budget, with up to 10,000 jobs at stake according to the Government but up to 30,000 at stake according to the industry, may I ask the Leader of the House whether he accepts that it would be appropriate to debate the Finance Bill in a Committee of the whole House? That would enable the maximum number of hon. Members, many of whom perhaps did not appreciate the importance of the measures in the Budget debate, to vote against these damaging Treasury proposals.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the arrangements for determining which parts of the Finance Bill are used to be taken in a Committee of the whole House are normally discussed through the usual channels. I am sure that those important elements of the usual channels who are present will have taken note of the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): Will the Leader of the House bring the appropriate Minister here so that we can have a debate on the proposed robbery of the British Coal superannuation scheme, as that proposal is so important to the people who will be affected by it?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to accept for one moment his description, but I draw his attention to the fact that the President of the Board of Trade will be here next Wednesday to answer questions.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an early debate on the circulation of racist and anti-semitic literature through the post? In particular, has the attention of the Leader of the House been drawn to a document, which is a peculiarly offensive and filthy forgery, that is circulating by the thousand in London? It purports to come from a synagogue and contains invented quotations from the Talmud, attacking the Christian religion. As it is equal in its cunning to "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion", and as intelligent people are believing its content and attacking the Jewish communities for having produced it when it is a fascist forgery, may we at least have a statement from the Home Secretary denouncing it as the forgery that it most certainly is?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to warn me that he would seek to raise the matter. I need hardly say that that is always helpful, if only because it enables me to be more constructive in my answers than I might otherwise be.

This seems to me to be an offensive anti-semitic document, which the House will deplore. The law on incitement to racial hatred is contained, as the hon. and learned Gentleman will well know, in part III of the Public Order Act 1986. Prosecutions under it can be made in England and Wales only by, or with the consent of, the Attorney-General. However, responsibility for the investigation of complaints about material likely to incite racial hatred rests with the police as part of their general duties in the enforcement of criminal law. In view of the responsibilities of the Crown prosecution service in advising on prosecutions, I should make it clear that I would be happy to arrange to send a copy of the material to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I hope that that answer is helpful to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I am sure that the Leader of the House is aware of the tragic incident that occurred at the last meeting of the Cambridgeshire hunt 10 days or two weeks ago. Many of my constituents were present when young Thomas Woreby was killed at the hunt. Given that, while ever there are hunts, there will be violence because young people will try to prevent wild animals from being torn to pieces in the name of sport, will the Leader of the House initiate an early debate on fox hunting?

Mr. Newton: There have been a number of violent incidents in or near my constituency as well, so I understand why the hon. Lady has raised that matter. I cannot promise an early debate, but we should be concerned to do anything that we can to prevent outbreaks of violence wherever and however they may occur.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Will the Leader of the House agree to an early debate on the destruction of the coalfield communities that will be brought about by the implementation of the Government's recent White Paper? Will the House join me in congratulating Women Against Pit Closures, which, 100 days ago yesterday, set up pit camps to defend the pits from closure and to defend the coalfield communities from destruction?

Mr. Newton: It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to know that, while, once again, I appreciate why he has felt it right to raise that point, as it is only a short time—just before the recess—since the House had an extensive debate on the coal proposals, I have no immediate plans to stage another.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): During the proceedings on the Finance Bill on Monday week, is there likely to be a statement on the issue of the council tax and timeshare dwellings, remembering that the statutory instrument has to be addressed within 40 sitting days of 11 March? Does the Leader of the House accept that there is considerable concern among timeshare owners who feel that their property is not used for commercial purposes?

Mr. Newton: Given that the council tax would be a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment rather than one to be dealt with in the proceedings on the Finance Bill, I am not sure of the connection that the hon. Gentleman makes, but I am aware of the concern and of the fact that my right hon. and hon. Friends have made a number of points relevant to that concern. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's raising of it this afternoon to the attention of the appropriate Ministers.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): The Leader of the House will remember that, in October, the Secretary of State for Employment announced a package of £75 million for retraining measures for redundant miners. On 31 March, she announced measures for the release of that money and it is clear that, because of those criteria, not one penny of that money will come to north Nottinghamshire. Miners feel that they are being short-changed by the Government over their jobs, their pensions and now retraining. May we have an urgent statement on that next week?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise time for an urgent statement, but I shall certainly bring the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on effective parliamentary scrutiny of the Prime Minister? Many hon. Members on this side of the House feel that Prime Minister's Question Time is too short, is full of planted questions and that the Prime Minister does not answer other questions effectively. Whatever else it is, Prime Minister's Question Time is not an effective way of checking the Executive. Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate so that we may examine possible ways of improving that accountability?

Mr. Newton: From where I sit, it looks like a pretty effective means of scrutiny, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, on the occasions when I have deputised for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, it feels like an effective form of scrutiny. What is more, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I think that my right hon. Friend is very good at responding.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): What chance is there of an early debate on the situation in the aerospace industry? Recently, 260 of my constituents on the production line of the executive jet of British Aerospace at Broughton lost their jobs and 700 of my constituents in the same factory on the airbus production line have also lost their jobs. Surely there should be time for a debate so that we may know what the Government are doing to assist the industry and my constituents who are soon to lose their jobs.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate, but I would make two points to the hon. Gentleman who, as ever, is representing the interests of his constituents. First, any difficulties are in common with aerospace industries around the world because of underlying recessionary difficulties which go well beyond these shores. Secondly, the British Government, not least my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have manifestly put a huge effort into obtaining orders for the British aerospace industry to help with the problems that the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): If the Leader of the House is not prepared to have a debate on Bosnia next week, may we have a debate on early-day motion 1766 which deals with arms dealing in relation to Bosnia?

[That this House questions the propriety of Baroness Thatcher calling for a lifting of the arms embargo on Bosnia when her family has substantial interests in the arms trade; and calls upon her to declare interests before future statements are made.]

Is the Leader of the House aware that some of us were incredulous when Baroness Thatcher talked about the innocent little Muslim children, given the way in which she treated those Muslim children in Iraq? When she talks about selling arms, we hear the footsteps of her son the arms salesman and the jingle of Arab money.

Mr. Newton: In view of the seriousness of the concern that is felt on both sides of the House about what is happening in Bosnia, and the difficulty of the issues involved, that question falls well below the level of events.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): If the Leader of the House accepts the seriousness of the situation in Bosnia and the concern about it, why is it not possible, even at this late stage, for the Government to reconsider next week's business and, instead of devoting three days to Maastricht, devoting at least one day to a wide-ranging debate on what can be done about the Bosnian situation to try to stop the continuing war crimes there—the atrocities, the systematic rapes—against people whose only crime, it seems, is that they are Muslims?

Mr. Newton: I make two points to the hon. Gentleman. First, it would have been open to his right hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench to choose that subject for the Supply day debate on Tuesday. Secondly, I shall take this as yet another request for what, increasingly, hon. Members on both sides of the House seem to hope will be an otherwise vacant day on Thursday, and I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's help in ensuring that such progress is made on the Maastricht Bill.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a debate next week on the publication of accounts by political parties? It will be entirely appropriate for the Leader of the House to make a statement in support of that today as there is a notice of motion on the Order Paper for an unopposed return under the Representation of the People Act 1983, which, as the Leader of the House knows, is legislation designed to prevent corruption through excessive expenditure during a general election. Why should not we have similar legislation to prevent corruption, once the Government are in place, by payments to a political party which produced, for example, before the last general election £17 million for the Conservative party?

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Not enough.

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. Gentleman says that it was not enough. That £17 million has secured a number of promises from the Government, and we want to know what those promises are and from where the money comes.

Mr. Newton: In view of the occasional remarks of some trade union leaders about what they expect from the Labour party in response to the financial contributions that they make, I find that a rather odd question. I will respond, in my usual low-key way, by saying that I have no plans for a debate next week.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Following the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), may I remind the Leader of the House that I have a ten-minute Bill application on the abolition of fox hunting on 27 April? In view of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks, perhaps I can put him down as one of the sponsors. In the meantime, may we have a debate in Government time on animal welfare? The Leader of the House will be aware that most hon. Members receive more correspondence on animal welfare issues than on any other subject. It would give us an opportunity to raise the subject of the slaughter of pilot whales by the Faroese and the failure of stores such as Marks and Spencer to take positive action to prohibit the sale of Faroese meat.

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman would be as surprised as the rest of the House if I were to respond by urging him on with his Bill or immediately promising him the time that he seeks. I want to correct a wrong impression that he might have gained from my, I hope, reasonably understanding reply to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell). The incident in my constituency that I referred to was gross violence committed by hunt saboteurs against people who were doing something entirely lawful. That too is something that we will be seeking to prevent.

BILL PRESENTED

Coastal Waters (Quality Standards)

Mr. Patrick Nicholls, supported by Sir John Hannam, Mr. Anthony Steen, Mr. Robert Hicks, Mr. David Harris, Mr. Rupert Allason, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Gary Streeter and Mrs. Angela Browning, presented a Bill to make provision for the introduction of a new system for meeting the costs of improvement of water quality standards in coastal waters; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 30 April, and to be printed. [Bill 178.]

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that yesterday we had a similar situation to that which we now face: a Bill was defeated—by 65 votes to 39—on what was, in House of Commons terms, a very thin day because we had just returned from the holidays. Roughly the same Bill was introduced yesterday, and we challenged it. You said on a former occasion that you would not scrutinise Bills which were presented in an attempt to circumvent a decision of the House.

"Erskine May" says on pages 468 to 469 that Bills should not be accepted if they were substantially the same. I think that the Bill presented today is substantially the same as the Bill which was defeated yesterday. I think that that flouts the rules of Parliament, and I would like to know your ruling and whether it has been scrutinised.

Madam Speaker: My ruling is precisely the same as the one I gave previously. I ruled earlier in this Session in respect of what was known then as the human fertilisation Bill, which was presented to the House by the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). This course is in order, and since yesterday's refusal to introduce was not the kind of decision which rules out the presentation of a similar but not identical Bill. In so ruling I have taken account of the precedent set in "Erskine May".

I, too, have looked at "Erskine May". Let me correct the hon. Gentleman by referring him to pages 468 to 470. On the earlier occasion I indicated that the existence of this loophole was something which might be looked at by the Select Committee on Procedure—that the House might wish to refer the matter to the Committee, and that remains my view. It is for the House to take action if it feels there is a loophole that needs filling.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 30 March]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

4.5 pm

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I have an announcement to make before the Committee discusses amendment No. 57. It is a reasonably long statement.

I am prepared, at the appropriate time, to select for separate Division amendments Nos. 225 and 268, both in the name of the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), amendment No. 426, tabled by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), the leader of the Liberal Democratic party, and, finally, amendment No. 420 in the name of the right hon. and learned Member the Leader of the Opposition.

I have received from all parts of the Committee requests for separate Divisions, on a considerable number of amendments that have been included in the groups that have been debated. As the Committee knows, in deciding whether or not to allow separate Divisions, the Chair is exercising its power over the selection of amendments which is conferred on it by Standing Order No. 31. As stated in "Erskine May", page 405, it is not the practice for the Chair to give reasons for such decisions. I do not propose to do so in individual cases.

However, I think that it would be helpful if I mentioned one very basic requirement which I am sure that, on reflection, members of the Committee will appreciate: that to be selectable for a separate Division the purport of an amendment needs to have been substantially covered during the course of the debate on the group in which it has been included. I am afraid that this simple criterion cannot be said to apply to a great many of the requests that I have received, and that therefore many of the relevant amendments do not get to first base in terms of selection for a separate Division. This is an obvious point, but I thought it might be useful if I were to put it on the record. Nevertheless, hon. Members will find that I have selected for separate Division a number of amendments and new clauses coming from different parts of the Committee.

As the Committee knows, on 30 March I made a separate announcement about my decision on a separate Division on amendment No. 27, to which some rather special circumstances apply. Since then I have received a number of representations on this matter. I have listened to the arguments, as I promised to do, and I have, to the best of my ability, taken into consideration the particular circumstances of the case. However, I am not minded to alter my previous decision not to select amendment No. 27 for separate Division.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I have listened with great care to your statement, and I want to begin by thanking you for your patience in listening to my representations yesterday with respect to amendment No. 27. Although I have always, throughout the many years that I have been a Member of Parliament, respected the authority of the Chair, I must ask you to think again about your decision on amendment No. 27. That amendment meets the criteria you have just described in outlining the reasons behind your decision. It was the subject of the longest debate we have had throughout the Committee proceedings. The amendment is in order. It was selected for debate. It stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

At no time during that debate, or subsequently in the weeks intervening until 30 March, was there any suggestion that my announcement to the House during my speech on amendment No. 27—that the Opposition would ask the Committee to divide upon it—was to be contradicted. It was therefore something of a bombshell to hear your ruling on 30 March.

I think that that ruling, which you, Mr. Morris, are now saying must be sustained, is a very odd and dangerous procedural precedent. I certainly cannot recall, in 23 years in Parliament, any precedent of this kind in all of the Committee proceedings in which I have played a part either as a Minister or as a member of the Opposition Front Bench. There may be precedents but I am not aware of them, and no one can show me any.

The reality is, we are told, that the Government are now to accept new clause 75. They are running away from a Division in the House of Commons on new clause 75, so your original argument in the submission of 30 March that you would accept a Division on new clause 75 but not on amendment No. 27—an argument, incidentally, that I never accepted because we did not regard them as alternatives—no longer stands because there is not now to be a Division in Committee on new clause 75. The Government have caved in on that aspect, as we understand that they are to do on amendment No. 420 and perhaps on others as yet unannounced.

I believe that the case for a Division on amendment No. 27 remains as overwhelming as it always has been, and that view is widely shared in the Committee. My view and our arguments, the nature of the amendment and its importance, were not affected by the very dubious ruling, which is itself contested, given by the Attorney-General and expressed to the House by the Foreign Secretary as a way of getting the Government off the hook on this crucial issue.

For all those reasons, I ask you to reconsider the unprecedented announcement that you have made to the Committee today.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I owe it to the right hon. Gentleman to respond to him immediately.

I have thought very deeply about this particular case. I thought about it originally because, while it is not for me to take into consideration political dimensions—and it is not—I have to be sure that the procedures I follow are ones that have logic on their side. I went very deeply into this matter all the way through and, indeed, it does not need me to remind the right hon. Gentleman of the number of references to it that I made.

I started with a reference in column 685 when the original point was raised following the right hon. Gentleman's intervention in column 402. I made a further announcement three days later in column 1026, and yet a further one some seven days later in column 483. I made yet another announcement in column 1271 before I made the substantive statement in column 161 on 30 March.

[The Chairman]

I must tell the right hon. Gentleman and the Committee that, in reaching a decision, I have to follow the traditions of the Chair that I now hold and recognise that they are there as guidance given to the Chair over time and that the Chair has to carry out the duties imposed on it. It is not a particularly easy decision on occasions. I know what the easy decision would be on amendment No. 27, and if I were to take it I would be the hero of part of the Committee. Nevertheless—*[Interruption.]* Order. If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and other hon. Members want to go outside, that is entirely up to them.

The easy decision would have been to have accepted, revised and looked again. Nevertheless, the Committee and the House have asked me to assess the merits of all the amendments and whether or not there should be a vote. I have spent many hours in preparation and many hours coming to a decision and I must tell the Committee that it will have to accept that, in the end, I have to make a judgment.

4.15 pm

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. Again, I listened carefully to what you told the House, and I noticed that you did not challenge my contention that your decision sets a precedent for the Chair in such circumstances. I repeat that I believe it to be a dangerous and extraordinary precedent. Having listened carefully to what you said, I can see in your statement no legitimate reason or argument for preventing the House from voting on amendment No. 27. You have certainly advanced no argument; there are no procedural arguments, and no arguments of precedent or order, to prevent the House from having a legitimate vote on the amendment.

I ask you again to reconsider your judgment. Many people far beyond the confines of the Chamber will feel that the House of Commons has been cheated of a legitimate reason to have a vote. I do not use that word lightly, but because I am singularly unconvinced—I believe that the majority of the Committee is unconvinced —about the reasons for your decision. With all due respect to the Chair, I say that, if we are not allowed to vote on amendment No. 27 during the Committee stage, we shall demand of Madam Speaker the right to reintroduce the issue and debate and vote on it during the Report stage.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I shall respond briefly to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

I think that the Committee needs reminding that it is settled practice of the Committee and of the House that the Chair does not give reasons for decisions. The Chair has listened to the representations. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that I have listened attentively to him and to his colleagues at an hour suitable to them on a number of occasions. I say to the right hon. Gentleman again that I have made the decision on the best advice and on my own judgment, and I have to stick by that.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): On a different point of order, Mr. Morris. It may be for the convenience of the Committee if I say that, of the four amendments that you announced that you would call for a vote, the Government do not intend to resist amendment No. 420.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. Although we greatly appreciate the enormous number of hours that you have devoted to the debate, may I ask you to consider two additional points that you may not have been able to consider before? The first is that the protocol which is the subject of amendment No. 27 calls on my constituents to pay money to the European Community for the social chapter applying to the other 11 members. Clearly that is a decision which Members of Parliament should make. It is the kind of thing that Parliament discussed in the time of King Charles: should we pay money or should we not?

May I ask you, Mr. Morris, if there is not some way in which the House of Commons can be allowed to decide, yes or no, whether our constituents should be forced to pay money for the social chapter of the other 11 member states? If we do not have the opportunity to decide, the money will simply be paid over whether we want to pay it or not.

The second issue is that of precedent. I have looked thoroughly through "Erskine May" and all the other basic information available, and I can find only two examples in the history of the Commons of such a decision being taken. One dates from 23 March 1964 and the other from 11 June 1968; both involved Back-Bench amendments, not official Opposition amendments, and in neither case was the decision delayed until weeks after the debate had taken place.

In view of the fact that you have served the Committee so superbly, Mr. Morris, and given so much of your time, and as you have listened to all the arguments and weighed all that has been said, will you tell us what on earth is the argument against letting the House of Commons decide whether we want to pay money to Brussels? Surely, as that is a taxation issue, we should be able to decide yes or no.

The Chairman: The hon. Member was kind enough to write to me on 5 April asking me to take into consideration those very points——

Sir Teddy Taylor: Not both of them.

The Chairman: With respect, the point about 11 June and the one point on 12 June are in his letter; perhaps he has forgotten exactly what he wrote about. At any rate, on 5 April he wrote to me a two-page letter and I can assure him that I have been over it with a fine-toothed comb. It was one of the factors that had to be taken into consideration in coming to my decision.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. From the beginning of this Committee there has been a clear wish on the part of a large number of hon. Members to be able to express a view on whether the United Kingdom should adhere to the social chapter. Are our procedures such that there is no way of taking such a vote, even if—as you, I think, argue —following the Attorney-General's ruling, a vote on amendment 27 would be virtually symbolic? Nevertheless, it would be a vehicle by which the Committee could express a view, and there is no doubt that it wishes to do so.

The Chairman: I am not sure that I can answer the hon. Gentleman's point of order, because part of it was not a point for me as Chairman. He was thinking aloud, if I may put it that way.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am most concerned about what is happening here at the moment. I do not believe that the Committee does itself any credit—and there is certainly not a precedent—when it challenges the ruling of the Chair on the amendments selected. There are ways in our procedure for that to happen, but it is not the custom for the Chair to be put under pressure by arguments about the decisions that the Chair has made in order to carry forward the debate in the Committee. It would set a very bad precedent in our procedure if, every time there was a decision that some hon. Member did not like, we got into a debate about whether we ought to have a vote on it. We have received your ruling, Mr. Morris. I believe that it should be followed and that we should get on with the debate. Enough time has been wasted.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Further to the point of order raised by the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), Mr. Morris. I think that all hon. Members would agree that, whatever the merits of any decision, the difficulty which you and the Committee face is the fact that, surprisingly enough, this Bill is not to ratify the treaty. The brevity of the Bill, coupled with the complexity, length and, indeed, importance of the two or three treaties to which it refers are the basis of our problem. So I wish to raise three points of order relating, in the reverse order, to your announcement.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to the Report stage. Can you tell us whether, to your knowledge, the ruling that you have just made prevents amendment 27 from being again tabled, debated and decided on Report, because I am quite sure that nobody wishes to cheat Parliament of an opportunity to vote on an amendment that has been selected, moved, debated, but not put?

The second point relates to the statement that you made about the selection of amendments for subsequent vote. I think you said that you were not able to select many of them because, although they had been selected for debate, during the course of the relevant debate the matters contained in those amendments were not covered. Am I right in saying that there seems to be some disequilibrium between the opportunity for debate, your opportunity for selection and the rules relating to the closure? Can we refer that to the Select Committee on Procedure?

The third matter relates to your list of amendments Nos. 225, 268, 426 and 420 for Division. May I confirm that those are to be taken immediately after the conclusion of the debate on amendment No. 57—perhaps today? If that is so, can you give us any idea of the new clauses and other amendments, to which you referred, which will be voted on before we reach the new clauses on the referendum, which I fancy will be next week some time? Unless we know that, hon. Members will not know what matters they are expected to vote on when we return on Monday.

The Chairman: There are some important points to answer there. I cannot make any decision that affects the Report stage. That is a matter for Madam Speaker and for her alone. On the question about Select Committee on Procedure, the Chairman of that Committee is present and he will have noted the hon. Gentleman's point.

On the question of separate Divisions—this is an important point—immediately following the conclusion of the debate on amendment No. 57, to be moved by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), there will be a separate Division, if so moved, on amendment No. 225, followed by a Division on amendment No. 268, if so moved, and followed by a Division on amendment No. 426, if so moved. At that point, we shall reach the clause stand part debate. After a Division on that, we shall have a Division on amendment No. 420, although I understand that there was an earlier statement on that amendment. That is the position on the hon. Gentleman's three points.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Following the explanation that you were good enough to give the Committee about why some amendments were not eligible for selection, does it not follow that, if some hon. Members had made shorter speeches, more amendments would have been eligible for selection?

The Chairman: Well over 100 hon. Members have contributed to substantive debates on amendments.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. My point is simple. Does not the Government's announcement during business questions that they did not propose to oppose new clause 75 have a bearing on your ruling? You could have found out about that only at the same time as other hon. Members. That must be a relevant factor in the ruling that you have been working out over the past few days. Given that that is a very recent change in circumstances, does it not mean that you should be allowed time for further consideration?

The key factor was that there were two amendments on the same point which were both available for Division. Now that we know that the new clause will not be opposed by the Government, surely that has a bearing on the decision that you have had to reach on amendment No. 27. Should you not ask, Mr. Morris, for some further time for reflection? Given the recent announcement, that would be well understood by all members of the Committee.

The Chairman: The announcement was as new to me as it was to the hon. Gentleman. I heard it on the monitor in my room at the same time as it was heard by hon. Members who were in the Chamber. I immediately sat down with my senior advisers and reflected on whether it did have any further impact on the lengthy discussion I had had earlier. I came to the conclusion that it did not.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Would you be good enough to expand a little on what you said about giving no reasons? That seems to have caused some misunderstanding among some members of the Committee. It is said that you appeared on "The Parliament Programme", which seems to many members of the Committee a very unusual thing for a Chairman to do. It is further said that you gave reasons for your decision not to allow a debate on amendment No. 27 on "The Parliament Programme". It may be——

The Chairman: Order. I gave no reasons at all.

4.30 pm

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

The Chairman: That seems to be the substance of the hon. Gentleman's point of order. If he will withdraw that point——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Budgen: I withdraw it.

The Chairman: If the hon. Gentleman has the transcript and says that I said that, he should produce it. If not, I shall be grateful if he will take my word and withdraw.

Mr. Budgen: I withdraw it. However, I understand—and I do not have the transcript—that you gave an explanation of your ruling in which you said that the Bill had received a substantial majority on Second Reading.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman ought either to come better prepared with his point of order or to accept the ruling I have given. I have said to the Committee that in this day and age, if the responsible media approach the Chairman for a general discussion on an issue of major importance to the nation, I have some obligation to the media.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I have no wish to enter into a discussion of your reasons for the ruling on amendment No. 27, although I very much support the remarks by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) when he addressed that issue. However, it is clear that your ruling is not supported by the official Opposition. So far as one can judge, it is not supported by any of the Opposition parties, and it is almost certainly not supported by a large number of Conservative Members. It may well be the case that your ruling is contrary to the wishes of the majority of the Committee.

My question to you is this: if that were the case, what remedy is available to the Committee? One obvious remedy would be to move and to attempt to carry a motion of no confidence in the Chair. I assume that no one would wish to see that draconian step taken, but if that majority exists, is there some procedure which would allow that majority opinion to be expressed in such a way as to ensure a vote on amendment No. 27, which the majority of the Committee may wish to take place?

The Chairman: It is the lot of the Chair to make impartial rulings. Impartial rulings sometimes support the majority of the Committee and sometimes the minority, but they have to be made on the best judgment of the Chair, and I have done my best and come to that conclusion.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In 1976-77, the Speaker of the House of Commons was asked to consider the question of hybridity. I understand from readings of Mr. Speaker Thomas that, as you pointed out, Mr. Morris, guidance is taken from the advisers and the Clerks of the House on decisions of this importance, and that initially the decision was taken that the Bill concerned would not be regarded as hybrid. However, it turned out that strong advice was given, contrary to what the Government draftsmen had been suggesting, that in this instance the Bill should be referred to examiners. Therefore, there is a precedent for a change in advice. Furthermore, it is perfectly clear that in relation——

The Chairman: Order. Maybe I shall let the hon. Gentleman continue, but I must not let him proceed on that point, because matters of hybridity are for the Speaker and not for me as Chairman of Ways and Means. If the hon. Gentleman has representations to make, they should be to Madam Speaker and not to me. I hope that there is some other element he wishes to raise.

Mr. Cash: Yes, indeed. It was not the question of hybridity, but the question that you raised, Mr. Morris, on the extent to which, as a matter of practice, you would rely on guidance from the Clerks of the House. It therefore follows that it is possible, even in matters of grave constitutional importance, for that guidance to be reviewed.

Just now in your statement, you put enormous emphasis on the length of the debate. I concur strongly with the remarks by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) about the money question. There is no doubt whatever that there was a lengthy debate. Indeed, it was followed by a further debate, in respect to which the Attorney-General made his submissions, which was followed by yet another debate. In those circumstances, I ask you, Mr. Morris, to review your decision.

There can be no doubt, both as a matter of practice and of length of time, that amendment No. 27 has been thoroughly debated and should be put to a vote. There is no precedent for such a situation to have occurred in the history of the House. In the light of those circumstances, I ask you to review your decision and take further guidance from the Clerks of the House.

The Chairman: I shall make two points in response to the hon. Gentleman. First, it is true that I get guidance, but I do not shirk making a decision. The decision rests on my shoulders alone and I have made it to the best of my ability—and so be it. Secondly—this is an important point and I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has not yet understood it, although we are entering the 20th day of Committee—it is not the length of time that is important. What is important is the content of the debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You said earlier that the decision which you had to make in this regard was hard. You could have taken the easy option. You could have taken the democratic option. You could have taken the option which said that a majority of the Committee wanted to vote for the social chapter, as provided for in amendment No. 27. Therefore, I believe that people outside the Committee—whatever the Government may think—will think that this is a crazy place when we can debate at length amendment No. 27 relating to the social chapter and they can see on BBC Ceefax at half-past one today what your decision will be in advance of what you have said now. *[Interruption.]* Yes, it was announced on BBC Ceefax at half past one today that the Chairman of Ways and Means will rule that there will be no vote on amendment No. 27.

They call it democracy. They call this place the mother of parliaments. We have the whole united Labour party in

favour of amendment No. 27. We have the Liberal Democrats, for what it is worth. We have the other minority parties. There are about 26 rebels who want to vote for amendment No. 27, yet in this tin-pot little arena we have a Chairman of Ways and Means telling us that we cannot have a vote. My view is that this is a stitch-up—and has been from the beginning. This is a conspiracy with the Government of the day. Amendment No. 27 was the only real chance that we had of defeating Maastricht and the Chair has not given us the chance to carry out a proper democratic vote.

The Chairman: I simply make one point: what appeared on Ceefax was absolutely nothing to do with me.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The difficulty for the Committee is that, through the mechanism of this Bill, we will be enacting a treaty which is attracting great constitutional interest. It is moving us from democratic accountable government to undemocratic accountable government, as has been explained. Therefore, we are looking at a constitution behind the mechanism of a Bill.

Effectively, you accepted the closure on some of the amendments on which some of us tried to speak and on which some of us were not called. What is the meaning of this place, as the fulcrum of democracy, if you deny us the right to vote on the motions and amendments on which we seek to vote? Clearly, that is encapsulated in your decision on amendment No. 27. It is highly unsatisfactory. What is the purpose of the House of Commons if it cannot determine the constitution of the United Kingdom?

The Chairman: The Committee has had 19 days on this Bill and is now entering the 20th day.

Mr. Shepherd: On a point of order——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already raised a point of order and perhaps I can rule on that. If he goes through the list of amendments that the Committee has debated, he will find that there is a representative from the group that he has been assisting. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) signed a great number of amendments, and I think he will find that the vast majority of them were debated.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. After a major amendment was properly selected by you, moved and fully debated in the House of Commons, we now face the extraordinary situation that we are denied an opportunity to vote on it. That could surely be justified only if the House were offered an alternative amendment of the same significance on which to vote. That is patently not so, as has been revealed by the Government's announcement that they are prepared to accept new clause 75, whereas they know very well that they cannot and will not accept amendment No. 27. That is to me the heart of the Bill and the debate, as I am sure that it is to many other right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Committee.

Mr. Morris, you heard the Government's announcement just a few minutes before you came into the Chamber. I have no doubt that you are a quick thinker, but I believe that the amendment raises such important matters that we are justified in asking you to reflect further on your decision.

The Chairman: The right hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian, so I take seriously the point that he has raised. I did reflect. There were 15 minutes or thereabouts between my seeing the announcement on the monitor and my coming into the Chamber. In that time I had to decide whether to change the decision that I had come to during the lunch break. I decided on balance that, despite the announcement, the basis on which I had reached my conclusions was unchanged. Therefore, I have to stick by that decision. I am sorry, but I am not persuaded that, even in the newly changed circumstances, a vote would be appropriate.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As Chairman of Ways and Means, you are not the King's man or even the Queen's person. You have a particular responsibility for money Bills and budgetary matters. You are the custodian of the democratic rights of the House. Your responsibility with regard to the disbursement of public moneys is clear: it is to the House and those to whom we, as elected representatives, are responsible. They look to us to ensure that our democratically expressed authority is given before their moneys are disbursed.

In this case, moneys are being disbursed for the implementation by the other members of the Community of the social chapter, to which we in the United Kingdom are not a party. To those outside it will look the most extraordinary anomaly, which is surely worthy of explanation, that, after long debate, we should not be allowed to vote on amendment No. 27. We have had a debate. Why, after that long debate, should we not be allowed to vote? Can you please, Sir, in this exceptional case, explain to us how on earth we can go back to our constituents who sent us here and say, "We debated long and hard on your behalf, but we were denied a vote by the Chairman of Ways and Means, who is responsible to the House and the country for the disbursement of public money and the democratic authority that goes with it"?

The Chairman: The hon. Member's colleague wrote me a long letter on that particular point. I weighed up the points and came to the conclusion that I reached. I am afraid that the hon. Member will have to accept that.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. We on this Bench would be the first to testify to the tolerance and diligence that you have shown in attempting to assess the views of the Committee as a whole, and not of any particular faction there. You would have been assisted in that regard if the Committee had not carried closure motions, thereby terminating many debates which would have given you a wider picture.

However, the same cannot be said of the amendment which is the subject of our discussion now. The debate was conducted in a constructive spirit by everyone who spoke, in the full expectation that they would be permitted the opportunity to vote on amendment No. 27 in the light of all that had been said during the debate. To some extent, through no fault of your own, you were bounced into a position today by an unexpected announcement made in an offhand way—I mean no disrespect to the Leader of the House: the announcement was simply drawn out in answer to a question. You had little time to reflect on the changed position.

In the light of what has happened and the way in which you have been caught off guard, and as you said just now

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

that the matter was of supreme importance to the nation, I join the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) in asking you, with great respect, to think again.

4.45 pm

The Chairman: I am grateful to the right hon. Member. The whole procedure for amendment No. 27 has been a moving target. As the Committee will be aware, I made it clear on several occasions before I made the announcement that the whole issue was a changing scene. I can do no better than read to the Committee column 483 of the *Official Report* of 4 March. I said:

"We are still some way off having to consider anything to do with amendment No. 27. As the hon. Gentleman will know, attempts are being made by hon. Members on both sides of the House to produce more amendments relating to this broad area. It would be wrong of me to make a judgment at this point on whether other amendments—or how many of them—may exist by that time."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 483.]

I have had to make judgments continually as we have gone along. I have based them on extensive documentation which I have kept on each and every amendment, not least amendment No. 27. That is the basis on which I came to my conclusion.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Few people in the House will understand better than me the burdens which you carry, because I seek in some modest way to share those responsibilities as a member of your Chairman's Panel. However, do you accept that many hon. Members will be deeply saddened and very shocked by the announcement which you have made to the House this afternoon? I am sure that you accept that leaders of political parties, Privy Councillors, Her Majesty's Opposition and numerous Conservative Members believe that amendment No. 27 is critical. You said in your opening statement and have subsequently repeated several times that the amendment was widely debated at great length and in depth. Many hon. Members who were not called to speak would have sought to do so if the Chair had not yet again accepted the closure.

Mr. Morris, you have a critical constitutional job in the House of Commons, to be guided not only by those who advise you but by the precedents of the House. But you surely also have a duty to the genuine Back Benchers of the House to ensure that the House can divide on critical issues. I am sure that I do not need to remind you or the Committee that amendment No. 27 is one of the most critical in the debates that have taken place during the Committee stage so far.

In addition, as my hon. Friends on both sides of the Committee have said, the amendment relates to money. Exceptional circumstances surround the statement that you have made. You stated that you were aware only 15 minutes before you assumed the Chair of the Committee that the Government were prepared to accept new clause 75, which deprives the House of Commons, and therefore the people of Britain, of the opportunity to decide one of the most fundamental issues contained in the Bill which we are debating in the Committee on their behalf.

As a member of your Chairmen's Panel, in view of the exceptional circumstances, because it was unfair that you had to reach a decision in just 15 minutes, and as many of Her Majesty's Privy Councillors have intervened to request that you review your decision——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member will recognise that tedious repetition is not something that any Committee is advised to follow and, as a good Chairman, doubtless he would rule it out of order, as I am now ruling that part of his remarks out of order. I recognise that, whatever decision I took today, one part of the Committee would be well pleased and one part would be upset—*[Interruption.]*—but that is the lot of the Chairman. It is the lot that I have to accept and I willingly accept it. In the end, I must make a decision.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I have no wish to complicate matters still further or make your already difficult job still more difficult. But I invite you to look again at amendment No. 453, which stands in my name. You might feel, on having looked at that amendment again and on further reflection, that it affords you an opportunity to achieve a compromise between the various views that have been expressed so far. With your indulgence, I will explain why.

Amendment No. 27 deletes the whole of the protocol, and that deletion led the Attorney-General to say that the Government could ignore any vote on amendment No. 27 since it was, in effect, a double negative. Leaving aside the merits or otherwise of the Attorney-General's opinion, many members of the Committee are unhappy about new clause 75, which stands in my name and that of others, because they feel that it is too remote from the debate that has already taken place on amendment No. 27, and I appreciate that point of view.

That is why I invite you, Mr. Morris, to look again at amendment No. 453, since it achieves the deletion of that part of the social protocol that allows the United Kingdom Government an opt-out. So although it is a deletion and remains in order, consistent with the acceptance of amendment No. 27, it would, if accepted, force the British Government to accept the protocol on social policy.

It has been accepted as being in order, it would give you the opportunity of a compromise, it does not fall foul of the Attorney-General's opinion—whatever the merits or otherwise of that—and it would perhaps allow the Committee the opportunity of the kind of vote which was anticipated on amendment No. 27 but which will not, if your ruling persists, now take place. That is why I urge you, with respect, to look again at amendment No. 453.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and he is right, in that I had to consider amendment No. 453 very closely. I reached my decision having done so.

Dr. Cunningham: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In view of the obvious disturbance and unease in the Committee, and the unusual course of events—to put it no more strongly than that—I beg to move,

That the Chairman do report Progress and ask leave to sit again.

I hope that you will grant that motion.

The Chairman: The Question is that I do report Progress. As many as are of that opinion say aye, to the contrary no.

The Committee proceeded to a Division—

Dr. Cunningham: Further to my point of order, Mr. Morris. I submit that the Committee should have an

opportunity to debate the motion that I moved. I understand that it is debatable and I urge you to allow it to be debated.

The Chairman: The right hon. Member asks whether a motion to report Progress is debatable. It is. After he had moved it, I quickly looked round the Chamber and did not immediately see hon. Members rising to speak to it—*[Interruption.]*—but I may have been mistaken. I now make it clear that a modest debate on the motion should take place.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Do I understand that the Division is off? If so, could it be made clear that it is off at this stage and that a debate on the motion to report Progress will now take place?

The Chairman: The Division is off.

Sir Peter Emery: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. While it is, of course, for you to decide whether the motion should be debated, it being debatable, do you agree that if you considered that we should proceed without a debate, it is within the power of the Chair so to proceed? In other——

The Chairman: Order. It was not my wish to prevent a debate. I did not see any hon. Members rise to debate the matter, but, clearly, as there was a misunderstanding, I am allowing a debate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new one?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. Am I right in saying that it was within the power of the Chair to allow a debate to take place and to call the Division off even if no hon. Member was standing at the time the vote was called?

The Chairman: Whether or not that be the case, it is clear that there was confusion, and hon. Members were not entirely clear what was going on. I hope that it is now clear that we are debating the motion to report progress. I call the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to open the debate.

Dr. Cunningham: I am sure that at least that decision and ruling will have majority support in the Committee this afternoon, Mr. Morris, even if others which you have given have not. It is important that we have an opportunity to discuss the events of the past hour. It is clear that the Government announced their decision on new clause 75 with little time for you, let alone the rest of the Committee, to reflect on the significance of that in respect of your provisional ruling of 30 March.

The Opposition have never accepted that amendment No. 27 and new clause 75 were alternate—that one vote and one decision on one of those issues replaced or obviated the necessity for a Division in the Committee on the other. We have always challenged that position, and we continue to hold that view.

Other than the adjournment of these proceedings to enable discussions behind the Chair to take place, the motion now before the Committee is the best way to proceed. Hon. Members in all parts of the Committee, not excluding the Government, should have a chance to assess the impact of your new decision, Mr. Morris. The reality is, as many hon. Members have made clear, that there is majority support in the Committee for a Division on amendment No. 27.

I recognise that amendment No. 27 has not been formally moved, but it was among a group of amendments that were discussed, it is in order, it stands in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and I maintain, as I said on a point of order, that the decision to disallow a vote on amendment No. 27 has no precedent. You have not challenged that argument, Mr. Morris, and I repeat it now.

Even as events have been unfolding in the Chamber, Ministers have been briefing the press to the effect that the Government are willing to accept new clause 75 because they will ignore the outcome of a vote on that issue. It is extraordinary that even while this discussion and disagreement is taking place——

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): The hon. Gentleman has made a serious charge. Perhaps he will name those Ministers.

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, I will in due course, Mr. Morris—but not for the moment, thank you very much. I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman is one of them.

5 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Gentleman has made a very serious charge. Perhaps he will name those Ministers. If not, perhaps he will withdraw his remark.

Dr. Cunningham: No, I have no intention of withdrawing my remarks—none at all. The right hon. Gentleman knows what has been the Government's briefing, which has been going on at exactly the time as we have been discussing these issues in the Chamber. I stand by what I said. I have no intention of withdrawing my remarks.

It is obvious that your ruling today, Mr. Morris, which will deny the Committee an opportunity to vote on amendment No. 27, will allow a discredited Government to escape the consequences of a potential defeat in the House of Commons and to ignore the will of the Chamber on Divisions on other issues before the Committee—and I do not withdraw my remarks but stand by them absolutely.

That will frustrate the will of Parliament by avoiding a vote on amendment No. 27 and the outcome of a potential defeat on new clause 75. As I said several times this afternoon, those circumstances are without precedent. I made the point and repeat it now, that it is our intention to press for the substance of amendment No. 27 to be brought before the House on Report. It would be outrageous if, following a review of your decision, Mr. Morris, or subsequently, Parliament were denied an opportunity to express a view.

On this occasion—this is not always true—I share absolutely the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I am delighted to be able to say that.

Mr. Skinner: I think that I had better write that down.

Dr. Cunningham: But I do not want to ruin my hon. Friend's reputation.

People throughout the country will be astonished that, after all the arguments on the importance of the social

[Dr. Cunningham]

chapter issue for the public, the House of Commons will not have an opportunity to record its view. Because the public will feel that they and their representatives have been cheated in being prevented from expressing their view, the whole standing of our proceedings in this place will be brought into disrepute. The public will really come to believe the argument that is all too often expressed these days: that the House of Commons has simply become a rubber stamp for any decision that the Government want to railroad through the Chamber.

That is an onerous charge to make, and I do not make it lightly. The Chair should reflect carefully on the consequences of public disillusionment about a ruling of such significance after so many hours of debate and discussion, on a subject of such importance.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I have been listening to the right hon. Gentleman with great interest: Why is it that members of the Labour Front Bench have left is so late to make a public fuss about amendment No. 27? They knew before Easter which way the decision was likely to go—the Chairman of Ways and Means had already made his announcement. He might have had time to reflect and reached a different decision, had there not been some rather quiet getting behind the pillars by members of Labour's Front Bench, who came forward with an alternative amendment to provide some kind of excuse for not taking amendment No. 27. Why has Labour come out in this way at the last moment?

Dr. Cunningham: I regard the hon. Gentleman's intervention as pure garbage and I am sorry that I gave way to him. For the record, you, Mr. Morris, made your provisional ruling on 30 March—a few days before the House rose for the Easter recess. You properly and generously offered to listen to my representations about your ruling. On reflection, I decided that I should establish precedent and examine parliamentary records during the Easter recess and then see you, Mr. Morris. I wrote seeking a meeting with you before the House resumed earlier this week.

You had an opportunity to listen to my representations only a little while ago and made your definitive ruling only today. So that puts all the nonsense in the hon. Gentleman's intervention into perspective. There is no question of our making an argument late in the day about the significance of amendment No. 27.

I spoke in the debate on amendment No. 27 on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Cabinet and myself. I said then, and have repeated many times since, that we expected the Committee to divide on that amendment. I repeated those arguments on 30 March and again today. To suggest that we suddenly decided, at the last moment, to make a fuss about amendment No. 27 is complete and absolute garbage.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): If, as it appears, the Committee will be able to make few decisions on issues of substance in this major constitutional issue and if the public take the view that legislation has been railroaded through the House of Commons without proper scrutiny and the House being allowed to do what it should, is there not a case for the other place examining the issues in more detail and taking a more radical view than it might otherwise do—as the only bulwark of democracy in this country?

Dr. Cunningham: I have never regarded the other place as a bulwark of democracy, so it is difficult to accept the hon. Gentleman's argument. The overwhelming majority of our fellow citizens rightly regard this Chamber as the bulwark of democracy—and it is in this Chamber that the critical decisions must be taken. In these circumstances, it is the duty of the Chair and of advisers to the Chair to find an opportunity for the House of Commons to record a view on amendment No. 27. If that cannot be done in Committee, it should certainly be done on Report. I will not resile from that view and those arguments.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The Chair's decision is of enormous constitutional importance. We will commence consideration of the Finance Bill in Committee on Monday week. If the Chair so chose, it need not accept votes on major issues of public policy and expenditure raised by members of the Labour Front Bench in Committee. The principle that has just been announced is of fundamental importance.

Dr. Cunningham: I wholly agree with that intervention. I repeat that the Chair is setting a dangerous precedent, when amendments regarded as in order, selected for debate and debated at length are not selected for a Division, against the majority views of the Committee.

Mr. Cash: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that on 30 March 1993, the Chairman of Ways and Means stated:

"Right hon. and hon. Members will see that I have selected for debate new clause 75 on transferred powers (commencement). As a corollary, I do not propose to select amendment No. 27 for debate or for separate Division."—[*Official Report*, 30 March 1993; Vol. 222, c. 161.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, as there was a so-called swap by way of corollary, it is at the heart of the question of the distinction—made by the right hon. Gentleman—between the content of amendment No. 27 and the content of new clause 75, which deals with the agreement of a future motion? Amendment No. 27 deals with the immediate question whether or not the social protocol should be excluded. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree?

Dr. Cunningham: We have always made it clear, and I am happy to do so again in response to the hon. Gentleman, that we have never accepted that amendment No. 27 and new clause 75 presented an either/or situation. We did not accept the argument that one could be exchanged for the other. The amendments have different impacts on the legislation. We had different reasons for tabling them and they provide quite separate opportunities for the Committee to express a view on different aspects of the legislation. That is why we could not accept your provisional ruling, Mr. Morris, of 30 March that, by agreeing to have a vote on new clause 75, we were accepting that there would be no Division on amendment No. 27.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I accept that the right hon. Gentleman is expressing the attitude of the Opposition. However, the Chair has decided that new clause 75 should be an alternative because of the use of the word "corollary". If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that that is a misunderstanding of his intention, would he consider

withdrawing new clause 75? If that happened, it could no longer be said that the acceptance of that new clause stops consideration of and, one hopes, a vote on amendment No. 27. If the right hon. Gentleman is serious in his opposition to this matter, as I assume he is, perhaps he will seriously consider asking his colleagues to withdraw new clause 75. If that were done, the Chair would be placed in the position of accepting a vote on amendment No. 27.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Think about it.

Dr. Cunningham: In response to that sedentary intervention and to the legitimate intervention of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), I have thought about it, but I dismissed it. It was in order to consider all these matters that I did not seek to discuss the position with you, Mr. Morris, immediately after your ruling on 30 March.

These are important matters, and we wanted time to reflect on their consequences and check the precedents. As I have said several times, I concluded that we were always right to argue that the two amendments were not alternatives, but that the Committee was perfectly entitled to vote on both of them. They are quite different in nature and intent and I saw no reason to accept the argument that we could have one or the other but not both. There is no precedent for that argument and no procedural argument in favour of that proposition. I did not feel obliged to accept it and I do not accept it now.

It has been to the benefit of the Committee, and I hope to your benefit, Mr. Morris, to allow this motion to be debated, not least because it gives another chance for reflection—what in old-fashioned jargon used to be called a cooling-off period—in which we can assess the issues. It would be remiss of me not to repeat that your ruling is seriously challenged by the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Cabinet and the Opposition. It is not legitimate or fair to the Committee or to our constituents to deny a vote on amendment No. 27. I emphasise again that in discussions with you, Mr. Morris, and subsequently with Madam Speaker on Report, we shall continue to explore the possibility of a legitimate opportunity for the Committee to express a view on this issue.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. At the beginning of his speech, the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) undertook to name the Ministers whom he alleged had been briefing the press outside. He has noticeably failed to do so. Would it be in order for the right hon. Gentleman to speak again to fulfil that pledge and demonstrate the seriousness of what he was trying to say?

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made three points and I shall seek to deal with them. He advanced the proposition, which may or may not be the case, that the majority of members of the Committee wished to have a Division on amendment No. 27. In response to that, Mr. Morris, you said that it is not always the Chair's duty to respond to the majority. Whether there is or is not a majority, it is extraordinary for the Opposition to propose that a majority should decide whether there should be a vote. *[Interruption.]* If I may say so, minorities who often seek the protection of the Chair would find the use of a Government majority to thwart their opportunity to express their opinion extremely inconvenient.

5.15 pm

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman said that the Government were seeking to escape a vote on the social chapter. The opposite is the case, because by accepting new clause 75 we are allowing the Committee an opportunity fully to debate the social chapter. Thirdly, the right hon. Gentleman made a series of allegations about Ministers. He has not substantiated those, nor will he be able to do so.

Dr. Cunningham: Downing street is giving a briefing on the view of Ministers. If the right hon. Gentleman is not one of the Ministers who holds the view that I have expressed, he should come clean and tell us on which Ministers' behalf Downing street is giving that briefing.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It may come as a surprise to the right hon. Gentleman when I tell him that I am perfectly well aware of the briefing that is emanating from Downing street and elsewhere. It is not what the right hon. Gentleman has alleged.

Mr. Salmond: I am strongly in favour of the motion to report progress. My first reason for that support is for your benefit, Mr. Morris, in your difficult job of chairing the Committee. That was mentioned in a point of order, and it is by far the most important reason. I fully accept that you found out about the Government's attitude to new clause 75 some 15 minutes before you came to the Chamber to rule on the matter. That was clearly the most important event this afternoon. Almost casually, in the middle of business questions, the Leader of the House observed that the Government had a mind to accept new clause 75.

Before that, it was sustainable, although incorrect, for people to talk up the importance of new clause 75 and describe it as a time bomb ticking away under the Government. As soon as the Leader of the House made his observation, it was clear that the Government regarded new clause 75, irrespective of briefings being given by Downing street, as much less a time bomb and more a damp squib. That must fundamentally change your observations about the relative merits of amendment No. 27 and new clause 75.

I make it clear that in my point of order I did not in any way doubt the fact that you, Mr. Morris, had no prior knowledge of the Government's announcement. On the contrary, I was reinforcing the point, because you were in the same position as other hon. Members and had no knowledge of the Government's apparent change of tack on new clause 75. It is inconceivable that you did not have the time that should have been allowed to make a decision of this magnitude. That is the fundamental reason for reporting progress. We must have time for proper consideration of the relative merits under the new circumstances of amendment No. 27 and new clause 75.

The hon. Member for Copeland spoke about a cooling-off period. Many people would benefit from reconsideration. People outside observing events in the Chamber today and in the past few months may wonder whether this is the place for matters such as Maastricht and the social chapter to be ultimately decided. I do not think that there has been anything so edifying about our

[Mr. Salmond]

proceedings this afternoon that it would suggest to the wider public that this Chamber is capable of making—or will even be allowed to make—decisions on issues of such fundamental constitutional importance as the concept of the social chapter.

I hope that, in the time for reflection that the motion to report progress will allow, those on the Labour Benches will look at the question of a referendum on that vital issue, a decision on which will be coming up next week, and at the amendments tabled today to the clauses in a referendum. They would allow for a vote in that referendum on the social chapter and allow the public to make a decision on the matters that will so manifestly not be allowed to be decided, or be capable of being decided, in this place.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am grateful that the Opposition have tabled the motion in this way, without making any criticism of you, Mr. Morris. As you have kindly referred to the letter that I sent you earlier this month, I should like to read out the last paragraph, which says:

"Could I also take the further opportunity of saying in all sincerity as someone who has been around the Euro debates for a long time, that many of us consider you have handled these rather difficult and touchy debates with great courtesy, efficiency and consistency in such a way that no one has a feeling of unfairness."

I meant that sincerely, simply because, although I say nasty things about people, I appreciate that you have performed your role, Mr. Morris, with the courtesy and fairness that is appropriate to the Chairman of Ways and Means.

I support the motion for three reasons. First, things have changed dramatically in the recent past. The statement by the Leader of the House, which came only a few minutes before your statement, Mr. Morris, and no doubt after it was written and then typed, has changed the situation dramatically. They might even be aware of that in Harrow, if they were prepared to listen. The Leader of the House said that the Government, who we understand have been phoning up people in America to ask them whether they would be voting against new clause 75, will now support it. That is a wholly new situation.

You have fairly said, Mr. Morris, that the intention of the Labour party in amendment No. 27 was the same as the intention of the Labour party in new clause 75. The difference is that we shall not have a vote on anything relating to the social chapter before the Queen has to sign Royal Assent. Therefore, the situation has changed dramatically. If we do not have a vote on amendment No. 27, there will be no opportunity for Members of Parliament to express their view on anything relating to the social chapter before the Bill becomes law. That justifies a period of reflection by you, Mr. Morris, on the judgments that you have arrived at, I am sure fairly and reasonably.

The second argument that I should like hon. Members to consider is whether there might be a case for a vote on amendment No. 27 in view of the astonishing statement made by the Foreign Secretary—the second statement on the Government's attitude to amendment No. 27. Hon. Members will appreciate that we had had a statement from the Minister of State which was made with the full authority of legal advice of the Foreign Office, but that the second statement said that that was all wrong and had to be reconsidered.

The astonishing thing was not that the Minister of State was wrong—we have become accustomed to that in these debates—but what happened after that statement. The Foreign Secretary then said that, even if we voted out the protocol from British law, he would still sign the treaty with the protocol in it and, to that extent, Britain would be obliged, under the terms of the treaty of Rome, to pay its share—one twelfth—of the costs of the agreement of the 11 on the social chapter. That is unusual, because the principle involved is whether it is a Community obligation.

Under the treaty of Rome, if an item of spending is a Community obligation, then Britain is obliged to pay, but if it is not a treaty obligation, there is no obligation to pay. In view of the strange and astonishing statement made by the Foreign Secretary, even if we vote against the proposal, it will still happen, and our constituents' money will be paid over. The issue has to be considered carefully by someone else. The only someone else is a court of law, which should have the opportunity to say whether it is right that, even if we remove that section from British law, we shall still have to pay the money.

I have a third argument, which I hope that the Committee will consider. It is a privilege to have hon. Members present to listen to the debate on Maastricht, because the great tragedy has been the low attendance in the debates. I am sure it is not because hon. Members are lazy—I know that they are all hard-working, decent, honourable Members, and that includes my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). However, they do not want to listen to the arguments on Maastricht because, while they know what great damage it will do, they are not sure what they can do about it.

Those hon. Members should appreciate that amendment No. 27 is not about the social chapter, as I am sure that they have been led by the Foreign Office and others to believe. It is about whether their constituents, including those from Harrow, will have to pay over cash to the EEC for the social chapter of the 11 other member states. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East thinks that it is a good idea to pay over money to Brussels, irrespective of the reason, but whether we want to or not, the point is that we should decide. The crucial issue is the old one of no taxation without representation.

Why on earth should my constituents or those of any other hon. Member be obliged to pay over money to Brussels for someone else's social chapter without their Members of Parliament having the right to decide yes or no? That is the issue over amendment No. 27. Some people would think that we should pay over the money and others that we should not. Therefore, I hope that it will be possible, over the weekend, before we return to the debate on Monday, for you and your officers, Mr. Morris, to think carefully about whether it is right and proper to ask taxpayers to pay money without giving the House of Commons the opportunity to say yes or no.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend remember the perceptive remarks, made after the statement by the Secretary of State, of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)? He said that, where there is a political will, there is a legal way.

Are we not facing a situation in which the Government are determined to get this through come hell or high water, whether or not it is democratic?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I know that my hon. Friend has more experience of the workings of the House, as a Chairman of Committees, than I do. I am sure that there is a great deal in what he says but, if we start talking about those issues, we shall get away from the basic, simple issue that we are meant to be discussing. My hon. Friend has spoken with great sincerity on something that is important and right. However, let us concentrate on the simple and basic issue of whether it is right for people who have fought hard to come to the House of Commons and become Members of Parliament, who have done their best to serve their constituents, to sit back and allow taxation to be paid over without having the opportunity to express their view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) hit the nail on the head, as he so often does. He said that, if we allow this huge precedent to go through, other taxation issues, on which Members of Parliament will not be allowed to express their view, will be allowed to go through.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the important point that he is making about taxation and our duties to our constituents goes to the heart of the treaty? Under the proposals of stage 2, not even to mention stage 3, the whole question of the basis on which our constituents will have their monetary affairs decided, public expenditure, the exchange rate mechanism, and other policies, are intimately bound up with the question of money. It is the prerogative of the House of Commons to decide those issues. That will be affected not only by the provisions that I have referred to, but by the provision to which my hon. Friend referred, in relation to the social chapter.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is right to make that important and huge point about the destruction of democracy, which those who follow these debates know is happening. However, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), there is no point in debating such great issues when what we are deciding on this motion is a simple issue.

5.30 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): As a parliamentarian of great experience, does my hon. Friend agree that the spending of money will not be addressed by their Lordships when they consider the matter in the other place? Therefore, if we are deprived of an opportunity to vote on this money matter, there will be no vote on it in Parliament. That is thoroughly undesirable and that is why we in this House have been given the power to consider monetary matters and the other place has not. With that power goes the right to vote on the issue.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As usual, my hon. and learned Friend is right. That was to be my fifth point, although I may not have expressed it so fairly and clearly. If we do not vote on the amendment on the control of cash, the other place will not be able to.

The fourth point that I was about to make concerned the question of precedent. I hope that it will be possible to reflect during the weekend. I have been searching for precedents but I can find only two. One was on 23 March 1964 and the other was on 11 June 1968. Both related to Back-Bench amendments and neither was in relation to an official Opposition amendment or announced, as in this case, weeks after the debate took place.

Finally, I appeal to the Liberal Democrats. The sad thing is that, as those who have fears about proportional representation know, at present the Liberal Democrats basically decide everything. I think that they know that this particular motion will not be decided by those who share my views, by the Opposition or by the Scottish Nationalists who attend these debates so regularly and who contribute in such a fair and objective way; it will be decided by the Liberal Democrats.

The Liberal Democrats have a simple decision to make. Is it right and proper that we should reflect over the weekend about whether it is a good or bad thing to vote on amendment No. 27? That is all we ask. We are not seeking to overturn the Government. We are in no way seeking to cast any reflection on the Chairman of Ways and Means, for whom I have a greater regard than any previous Chairman because of what he has done throughout this long Committee. If anyone doubts that, they should have been here to see how he has gone out of his way to protect minorities.

We are not trying to overturn the Government or the treaty. *[Interruption.]* I am. Make no mistake about it. I shall do everything in my power to stop the treaty being ratified because it is an affront to destroy people's democracy and to take rights from them without giving the people an opportunity to have their say. However, that is the third great argument, and I cannot get into that. The crucial thing is to appreciate that we are considering something simple and basic. The only issue is whether the Chairman, with the help of his advisers and in the light of a new situation which arose only 15 minutes before he rose to speak, should have the opportunity to reflect on whether we should vote on amendment No. 27. That is all we are asking for.

The Liberal Democrats have a great tradition of fighting for people's rights. History shows how the Liberal Democrats represented free trade and how, despite all the difficulties facing them, they have gone out of their way to do what they think right in fighting for people's rights and for democracy. I hope that on this one occasion they will say that it is not a question of being for or against Maastricht, or for or against the Government, but a question of what is right and proper for a democratic House of Commons.

It would be an affront to our constituents if we were to in any way permit taxation to be applied without a vote of the Members of the House of Commons. In view of the Government's astonishing decision to support new clause 75 instead of opposing it, it would be an affront not to reflect on that further. Therefore, I hope that, in the unique power and opportunity that they now have, the Liberal Democrats will vote to think over the matter during the weekend. Such a decision would not bring down the economy or the nation; it just means thinking about something for a few days.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman is going to vote to beat the rail strike.

Sir Russell Johnston: It is all a bit messy. I have never really participated in any debate quite like this before. We are debating a motion to report progress. Usually such a motion is about getting on with the business, but this is about not getting on with the business. The effect of agreeing to the motion will, presumably, be a short further delay in the Committee stage—and to beat the rail strike, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) rightly pointed out, but that is incidental.

As the House knows, the Liberal Democrats believe in getting the Bill through as expeditiously as possible. Usually, therefore, we would oppose a motion of this sort if we felt that it was being introduced to prevent that. We do not agree with those who have sought, by all means possible, to delay the Bill, and we also regret that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, being declared supporters of Maastricht, have at no stage sought a reasonable, even a behind-the-Chair, agreement with the Government about rational progress in the timetable of the Bill. That would have been the right thing to do.

The motion has been moved because of amendment No. 27, the idea being, as expressed by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), to allow time for reconsideration. That is odd in a way, too, because we are not supposed to debate your ruling, Mr. Morris, at all. Yet, in a way, we are, or at least we are running close to it. That is also odd.

According to the Attorney-General, amendment No. 27 would have no legal effect whatever and, therefore, it would not matter if it were agreed to. The right hon. Member for Copeland said that that was open to question. The higher metaphysics of the law will always produce something that is open to question. I am quite prepared to accept that what the Attorney-General says is true. I do not know. I have no means of arguing in any sensible way against it. However, it would nevertheless be a symbolic vote. There is no doubt about that—I think. But I am not even sure about that in a way. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members laugh, but consider this——

Mr. Skinner: What does the right hon. Gentleman tell the electorate?

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the hon. Gentleman be quiet for a minute?

The Euro-sceptics on the Government Benches would vote for amendment No. 27 because they do not believe in it. Practically all of them being to the right of the Conservative party, they are against the social chapter. Therefore, many Conservatives, and perhaps—with all respect to the right hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—a critical number of Conservative Members would vote for the social chapter because they were against Maastricht and for no other reason.

Meanwhile, in the rest of the Conservative party, a number of Members who are in favour of the social chapter would, in these circumstances, vote against it. So hon. Members may laugh and say, "Ha ha, he cannot make up his mind," but I am just trying to point out to the Committee that none of this is simple and easy. To claim that in some way or other this vote produces a clear result and shows what hon. Members think is not true. Therefore, it is difficult.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, but, alas, I am not right hon. yet.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I see that the hon. Gentleman is blushing. It is quite clear what the attitude of the Committee is to the mistake I made, so I wish the hon. Gentleman good fortune.

Is the hon. Gentleman, as the spokesman for the Liberal party, prepared to accept the expenditure of money by other countries without the House having the right to vote on that expenditure? If so, how does he equate that decision with the traditional view of the Liberal party about spending and the need for parliamentary approval?

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not deny that the issue is important, but it is not what we are talking about in this argument. We are talking about a large number of hon. Members who wish to express a view about whether Britain should accept the social chapter. I was simply pointing out that the trouble is that, because of the nature of the break-up of support in the Committee—unless we have a free vote—it will be very difficult to secure a result that genuinely reflects views. That is a big problem.

As for the basic issue and the business statement about new clause 75, I have not had a proper opportunity to think it over. It was described by some as the "Semtex amendment" that would explode everything; it was said to be a very pertinent amendment. It was the replacement of amendment No. 27—there is no doubt about that; that is how it was conceived—and now, suddenly, we can accept it; it does not matter; it is all right; no problem. I find that very difficult to rationalise.

For once in my life I am prepared to agree with the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—even at great risk to my privy councillorship—that a pause for consideration is sensible in the circumstances.

You, Mr. Morris, have chaired the Committee in a magnificent and fair way. Nothing that I say in any way reflects on you.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I trust that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) will soon become a right hon. Member and that—having announced his aspirations in a delightful way—he has not sabotaged them with his final sentences.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) rose to intervene, I heard some of my hon. Friends say, from a sedentary position, "Be kind to him, Ivan." They were willing him to vote on their side. He has clearly satisfied their demands and they will therefore support any recommendation that may be made in that regard. I was glad that the hon. Gentleman ended with a tribute to you, Mr. Morris, because I believe that anyone who is fair-minded and has watched the proceedings of the Committee can only come to the conclusion that you have performed an exceptionally difficult job extremely well.

There can have been few occasions during the post-war history of Parliament when minorities have had a better opportunity to voice their legitimate opinions. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East acknowledges that.

What troubles me is that in another guise—until the hon. Gentleman defused the situation with his speech—we came close to embarking upon a criticism of a ruling of the Chair. That is a very dangerous precedent to establish. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) talked about dangerous precedents; if there is a dangerous

precedent at issue this afternoon, it is that. The cornerstone of the House and the whole constitution of this country is the impartiality of the Chair. I believe, Mr. Morris, that you have upheld that extremely well since you acceded to the post of Chairman of Ways and Means. I hope that you will long continue to hold that office.

One expert in procedure, who contributed a particularly perceptive point of order this afternoon, is the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We do not always agree on political issues, but I yield to none in my admiration for him as an expert on procedure in the House. He made the important point—which has been taken up by others—that there will be a Report stage. On Report, certain things will obviously be debated; it is up to Madam Speaker precisely what they will be.

5.45 pm

When the House first meets in any new Parliament, the first thing that it does is to elect a Speaker—someone elected by the House in whom the House, by that election, reposes its trust and confidence. It seems to me, Mr. Morris, that there should be no challenging of your ruling, which you have made with expert advice. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), I speak as a member of the panel of Chairmen. It is not easy to come to decisions on amendments, and there may well be an amendment about which there are passionate views, but which is just out of order; or it may not be possible to select it or call it for voting. You have made your decision honourably and rightly, Mr. Morris, but there will be another opportunity to debate it. It would be far better if we proceeded with our discussions today.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about me, although it is not necessarily true. But he has just gone a shade further than he really needs to. I think that he is right to say that "we hope" that there will be that opportunity, but I hope he will agree that there is no guarantee that there will be.

Mr. Cormack: I am sorry if I was not entirely clear. I said that we know that there will be a Report stage. What I was seeking to say is that, because we know that there will be that Report stage, it would be far more sensible not to attack, directly or indirectly, the ruling of the Chair and to accept that he has—whatever we may think of his ruling—agonised over it. It would now be appropriate for those who feel strongly about the issue to make representations not to the Chairman, but to Madam Speaker. She will have ample time between now and the Report stage to reflect on all the issues and, having taken advice and, in her wisdom, to decide whether she feels this issue should be put to the vote. I accept that my hon. Friends feel very strongly about the issue, but the Committee is not being denied a final opportunity this afternoon.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: The worry for many of us on both sides of the Committee is that the ruling that has been made sets an important constitutional precedent and therefore can be cited again. I asked earlier about the Finance Bill. Here we have a precedent relating to the expenditure of money, in which the Chairman may decide—as a matter of power taken unto himself, on the authority of the House—that questions which are of importance to our perception on behalf of our constituents or this country may not be put to a vote. That is what we are challenging, and surely we are right to challenge it.

Mr. Cormack: I do not believe that my hon. Friend is correct in his deductions and conclusions. I do not believe that any Chairman of the Finance Bill Committee—I have done the job myself on a couple of occasions—would act in the way that my hon. Friend suggests or supposes. *[Interruption.]*

We are all entitled to our opinions. I do not believe that the Chairman of Ways and Means, in taking his decision today, has in any way created a dangerous constitutional precedent. What I am saying—and I appeal to all members of the Committee—is that we damage our Chair at our peril and to the danger of our Parliament.

Mr. Salmond: Does not the hon. Gentleman consider that the real damage to the Chair came from the announcement during business questions which put the Chair in the almost impossible position of having only 15 minutes to consider this vital matter? Does he accept that the real damage to the Chair came from his own Front Bench?

Mr. Cormack: The point that I make once again—and it is the most important point of all—is that this is not the final opportunity. There is to be a Report stage. It is entirely up to those hon. Members who feel strongly on the issue to make their detailed representations to Madam Speaker, who will have not 15 minutes but probably far more than 15 days to come to a decision. I believe that it would be in the interests of the Committee and of those who still look to the House of Commons for some sort of democratic guidance to get on with the business that we are supposed to be discussing.

Mr. Spearing: You have decided, Mr. Morris, that we should debate the motion to report progress. I view that as a procedural safety valve. It allows pause for reflection, at least for a short while. We shall then decide whether to have a longer period for reflection. I support that, for a number of reasons which are self-evident.

May I take up the point made by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) about another opportunity for further representations, an opportunity which may or may not arise? On this issue, I disagree straight away, perhaps unusually, with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who said that the whole thing was a stitch-up. I happen to believe that, as far as we can provide for it, the procedures of the House are there to prevent stitch-ups. Occasionally there are attempts to have stitch-ups, but in my experience when someone in some way tries to stitch up something, we usually run into procedural trouble.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Like today.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, indeed. I said that someone may try to stitch up something. When, therefore, we get into procedural trouble, the yellow lights flash, not just for those who may have precipitated the situation but for Parliament itself.

People complain that Parliament is not dealing properly with the Bill. That, I suggest, may be because of the nature of the Bill and the nature of the material—just as the body tries to reject something that is indigestible and that may come up in the other direction.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The hon. Gentleman is renowned in the House of Commons for his understanding of its procedures. Can he quote to me any precedent when

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

a leading Opposition motion, in the names of official Opposition spokesmen, pressing for an amendment has been refused on any major piece of legislation going through the House of Commons?

Mr. Spearing: I do not want to go too far down that road. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I know of no precedent in that respect. I bear in mind the terrible difficulties faced by any occupant of the Chair, whoever it may be. Therefore, I can divine certain reasons why the decision has been made, but it does not mean that, if I were the occupant of that Chair, I would come to the same conclusion. I intend to devote the rest of my remarks to saying why it should be possible for a decision on amendment No. 27 to be taken. I hope, Mr. Morris, that you will take that remark in the spirit in which it is proffered.

To revert to the question of yellow flashing lights, this is not the first problem that we have encountered. There has been a succession of constitutional and procedural hiccups along the way. To take the treaty that we are discussing, it was published four weeks after the general election, which was supposed to give the House of Commons a mandate to pass it. That, surely, was a major constitutional hiccup that we should not forget.

Furthermore, this is a treaty to amend another treaty, which would produce a third treaty. That is not before us, either as a treaty or in the Bill. The Minister of State is not here. When we asked him on several occasions whether he would print that treaty—for it will be a treaty of union, if it goes through—he said no. The Government are not prepared to produce a document that would certainly result from the Bill being passed and the treaty ratified.

There is also the fact that one member of the European Community has said no to the treaty. Unanimity, however, is required. Many people thought that that was it—that we would not proceed with the Bill because, under article 236, there was no unanimity. But some people said, "Oh, no, there is going to be some arrangement." So the Prime Minister said, "All right, we'll pause now," which was quite fair, "but we'll have a vote as to whether to proceed at all."

At Edinburgh a decision was taken by the Council of Ministers that has no vires whatsoever. The Minister of State agreed only yesterday that it makes no difference at all to Denmark's obligations. Denmark's referendum, therefore, is a repeat of something to which the Danish people said no. That is another curious constitutional hiccup along the way.

Then we had the debate which the Prime Minister offered. It was a most dramatic and extraordinary parliamentary occasion and was won by a few votes. All sorts of accusations were made. If that vote had not gone the Prime Minister's way, we should not have embarked upon the proceedings on this Bill, would we—or re-embarked upon them? That was another curious incident in the night, as Conan Doyle would have said.

The Bill is very brief. It details with over 200 articles of a treaty and 16 protocols, but we decided to discuss the contents of that treaty in a tiny Bill. Of course, there are procedural difficulties which you, Mr. Morris, and the rest of us have had to grapple with. The media say, "Can't Parliament get its act together?", even though Parliament is being asked to digest something that is highly indigestible.

That brings us to the difficulties of today. We all knew, including you, Mr. Morris, that at about 4 o'clock today we should reach crunch time. So many issues had to be decided all at once. We had to know your decisions on amendments Nos. 27 and 75; we had to know what debates we were to have; we had to know which amendments had or had not been selected; we had to know what the result of the vote immediately after the debate would be. Into that maelstrom of decision taking and 10 minutes before that announcement was due to be made, the Government made an announcement of their own, which could change the complexion of the debate altogether.

We are therefore in the position—and you, Mr. Morris, are in the most unenviable one—of having all these things coming together procedurally at one moment. Of course, there are difficulties. I put it to you that the reason for the difficulties is that most constitutional and parliamentary proprieties have been ignored. Nothing so far may have happened that is outside the rules of procedure, but those rules have been stretched to breaking point.

We have to ask who is responsible for stretching constitutional practice and the rules of the House of Commons to breaking point and, moreover, in what cause they have done it. Having asked a rhetorical question, I shall give a factual answer. The cause for which they have done it is to pass power away from the House of Commons. Is that an honourable cause? Is it honourable to stretch the rules of procedure? No.

Therefore, we come to the unenviable decision that you, Mr. Morris, have to make on amendment No. 27. I can see that there are some reasons for it, but I would also suggest to you that there are other reasons which should be taken into account. I put it no higher than that. People look to the House of Commons to provide parliamentary practice as it should be. I would not put it as high as that. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said that this is the mother of Parliaments. I believe, as Lord St. John Stevas would say, that that is wrong. It is the United Kingdom which is the mother of Parliaments. Nevertheless, the procedures of this place are the envy of some other Parliaments that I could name.

What do we do? The procedure is that we have a motion, question, debate and decision. Everything is decided in that way. That is the sequence of events and the rules are fairly clear. If a motion or an amendment is selected, there is a motion to move it. The Chair then proposes the question that the motion or amendment be made. We then have a debate, followed by a procedure for closing the debate and a decision. I remind the House that, at that point, an hon. Member is entitled to request to withdraw the motion. Only one out of 600 or so hon. Members has to say no for the decision to be made because the question has been put and the debate has been conducted.

People outside and in the world as a whole will see that an important question has been put, whatever its purport and whether it means nothing or everything. They will see that it has been debated, but then, for some curious reason, the House is denied the opportunity of coming to a

decision. They will realise that something is wrong. It will be not only the yellow lights that are flashing, but red ones, and doubly red ones at that.

Just as justice has not only to be done but be seen to be done, so our debates must lead to a decision. If they do not, democracy had better look out.

6 pm

Sir Peter Emery: I am concerned about this debate because it seems that, although it is wrapped in cotton wool, there is a criticism of decisions made by the Chair. Following the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), we are beginning to talk about democracy and also about destruction, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). It is strange that, although more than 240 hon. Members voted for the Bill on Second Reading, some now believe that democracy is being frustrated because a small minority who oppose the Bill find that they cannot get exactly what they want.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Sir Peter Emery: I have no intention of giving way.

Another issue of great importance is the fact that your decisions, Mr. Morris, whenever they are made, should be accepted without question by any hon. Member. If there is any doubt about that——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In view of the line that my right hon. Friend is taking, will you advise the Committee whether it is in order for hon. Members to change their minds about the Bill? Second Reading took place nearly a year ago and many events have occurred since then. My right hon. Friend is suggesting that it is not in order for hon. Members to change their minds.

The Chairman: That is not a point of order for the Chair. I hope that we can now listen to the right hon. Gentleman, who is dealing with important matters.

Sir Peter Emery: Under the Standing Orders as set out in "Erskine May", it is absolutely clear that, in a debate on a motion to report progress, the Chair does not give reasons for its decisions on selecting amendments——

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new point of order and a matter for the Chair?

Mr. Cash: It is indeed. My right hon. Friend is referring to "Erskine May", a pretty weighty matter in itself. He is telling us that, under Standing Orders, the Chair does not give reasons for the selection or otherwise of amendments. If he had read further and glanced at page 405, he would have seen that it is modern practice, not a question of Standing Orders, whether a reason should or should not be given for selecting amendments. He should perhaps cast his eye down and read a little more carefully.

The Chairman: That has nothing to do with the Chair. We should let the right hon. Gentleman make his speech as he wishes to make it.

Sir Peter Emery: If my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) wants the reference, it is page 405, the third paragraph and the last sentence. That is the end of the sentence.

The Committee knows that there is something inherently wrong with our challenging the Chair on its decision whether or not to select amendments. When that happens, we get ourselves into exactly the situation that we are now in. We are having a debate——

Mr. Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend in full flow, but surely the motion we are debating is whether we should report progress. No one is suggesting any criticism of you, Mr. Morris, and my right hon. Friend is wrong to infer that we are.

Sir Peter Emery: Obviously, I have been listening to a different debate from my hon. Friend. If the debate is not about whether an amendment should or should not be selected and voted on, I do not know what the devil it is about. For my hon. Friend to suggest that that is not the point of the motion to report progress shows that he is as much out of touch on this aspect as he is on the whole of Maastricht.

It is absolutely clear to me that the moment the Chair bends over backwards to be generous and give reasons for its decisions, it opens itself to the sort of problems that have arisen today. It is interesting to note that when you decided, Mr. Morris, that there should be a vote on new clause 75 in place of amendment No. 27, there was no major criticism of you. If we had proceeded to a vote on new clause 75 and the Labour party and its allies had won, there would have been much rejoicing and a belief that the Government had been defeated. Now that the Government are willing to accept the new clause, there is no rejoicing. This motion is merely another attempt to snare the Government.

Those who talk about money should reconsider the original debates on the Single European Act. The way in which control over money matters was handed over then is much greater than anything suggested in the Bill. People should realise that there is a lot of pseudo-rhetoric which has nothing to do—*[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has the right to be heard. Hon. Members may not agree with him, but they should listen. He is a senior Member of the House.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I have been listening with great interest to my right hon. Friend. I dare say that he is coming to a conclusion. May I simplify matters by suggesting that what he wants to say is that the House should not vote on anything?

Sir Peter Emery: No one has made that suggestion. That is exactly the calibre of debate that we have when we get ourselves into this situation.

I repeat for the last time that in future the Chair might be best advised not to bend over backwards to help some hon. Members who have been pressing for reasons but to reach a decision without giving reasons, as "Erskine May" suggests. We should not then have a debate, and there would not be the sort of problem that we have at the moment.

Mr. Skinner: I do not know whether I shall be smearing anybody, but at the outset I say that the decision made today by the Chair was appalling. I do not accept for one moment anything other than what my instincts tell me.

[Mr. Skinner]

When I spoke before Easter, when a short statement was made about new clause 75, I stood where I am standing now and said to you, Mr. Morris, that I smelt a rat. I believe that events have proved that I was right.

At the very beginning we were told that our only real opportunity to defeat the Government was the social chapter. It is true that we defeated them on the Committee of the Regions, but nobody really expected that. However, when it comes to main Maastricht issues, everybody—everybody in the media and even millions of people outside who do not follow such events carefully—knew, because of all the comments that had been made, that the social chapter was the one issue on which the Government stood to lose. At the beginning things were difficult because some of the Tories who voted against Maastricht were a bit unsure of their ground on the social chapter—I fully understand that. But after a while they came to the conclusion that that was the only way that they could undermine the treaty. The whole Labour party was going to vote in the same way; the Liberals, for about the only time, were going to vote that way too, and so were all the other minority parties.

What the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) says about people outside not understanding the issue is fanciful. They understand only too well that the Government were in peril on amendment No. 27. When new clause 75 was tabled, some of us suspected that there was some murky work afoot. I have never taken the view—you in the Chair can accept this or not, Mr. Morris—that the Chair of the House of Commons is immune from the Government and the establishment. You can call that criticism, or call it what you like, but I have never varied from that point of view. Events show me that, generally speaking, the Government are expected to get their measures through. That is what it is all for. The establishment is there to win and the Opposition are there to try to defeat it on occasions. I went through the whole period 1974 to 1979, and I know what happens when the Chair is faced with a dilemma. I saw it all then, so I do not want any lectures about the idea that somehow or other Mr. Morris should be immune from criticism.

We are debating an issue that is in a time warp. Maastricht is about yesterday; it is not about tomorrow. The treaty is all about an issue that is past its sell-by date, and some Tory Members know that. They may understand it for reasons different from those that influence us, but they are strong enough to stand up against the treaty. Thousands of other people in the Tory party must support what they have done over the past few weeks.

What has happened with all the jiggery-pokery? When the Government first realised that they were in a mess they brought out the Attorney-General. You can believe him if you like, but he is a member of the Cabinet and his job was to lay a trail to try to separate the Tory rebels, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour party. That is what the game has been all about from the beginning, because there was a majority for amendment No. 27. How could the Government get off the hook? Then, suddenly, new clause 75 appeared. I do not know who invented that, which heads were discussing the issue—[HON. MEMBERS: "The Opposition."] I know whose names are on the amendment paper, but I wondered whether there had been other discussions.

Let us assume for a moment that the new clause was tabled innocently. The Government realised straight away what a great opportunity it presented. What a chance to try to shift the debate on to another issue. I believe that the stage was then set for a betrayal. That is why I said what I did at that time.

Today at 1.30 on the BBC Ceefax, there it was. Ceefax said that there would be a ruling in the House of Commons today and that the Chairman of Ways and Means would not allow a vote on amendment No. 27. I came to the House and mentioned that to one or two people and they asked me whether I had got it right. I said that I had read the item several times. So it was no surprise to me when a further trail was woven in the Committee today. However, in the 23 years that I have been in the House, including my early days when I used to listen to the arguments in Committees, I have never known of one occasion when the Chair has not allowed a vote on an amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition—although there have been many occasions when the tin-pot Liberals have moved an amendment and the Chair has said that, on balance, a vote would not be allowed.

6.15 pm

I find it odd that people in the other countries can have a referendum but we cannot even have a vote in the House of Commons. The Danes can have a referendum; they have even had to have a second one, and I hope that people will be singing, "Wonderful, Wonderful Copenhagen" again in a few weeks' time. The Danes might save us all the bother. The French and the Irish can have referendums but the Prime Minister, banging the Dispatch Box, told us, "We do not do things like that here; we discuss things line by line and clause by clause, and we vote on the issues. That is our wonderful parliamentary democracy. It is not for us to have referendums or to go to the people; we have a super democracy that enables us to decide." That was until the Government realised that they would lose. Then they conveniently found ways and means to dodge the column. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ways and Means."] I choose my words carefully.

This is a sad day. You can call it democracy if you like, but I do not believe that Maastricht is about democracy; it is about selling out to Brussels, Germany and all the rest. It sickens me to think that, after the halcyon days of the Common Market are over, some people here still believe in it; they are stuck in that little cocoon in which the Rome treaty and the Maastricht treaty will bring in all the goodies for Britain. Let us understand that treaties do not last for ever. Why should this treaty last much longer than it already has?

What has happened today is a disgrace. Millions of people out there will say, "Why should we bother sending MPs to Parliament? Why get involved?" When Members get to Parliament some of them betray their promises; I understand that. They may not do it for Machiavellian reasons, but none the less they do it. But we have seen an example of something else today, and it has not been about run of the mill Members of Parliament or Governments; it has been a conspiracy in which the decision has been made that, having been prevented by the Government from having a referendum, the British people are to be stopped from even having a vote, through their representatives, on

the crucial issue. Everybody knows—the dogs were barking it in Bolsover—that the Government were in trouble on amendment No. 27. Every inch of print on Maastricht has been mainly about this issue, as have all the comments that have been made. Then we have the appalling experience of finding out that there will not be a vote.

They call this place the mother of Parliaments. They tell the eastern countries to copy us, that they have never understood democracy. They say, let us take it to Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria; let us tell them how to do things, because we are super-democratic. Yet, when we can have as many votes as we like on all the little issues, when 60 people go into the Lobby, on the crucial issue, when it seemed that the Government were in peril, the official Opposition and the other Opposition parties, and those on the Conservative Benches who were going to join us, have been deprived of the crucial vote. It stinks to high heaven.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been many tributes to the Chair during this Committee, and I would like to pay tribute to the Chairman for the imaginative way in which the proceedings have been conducted this afternoon.

We had to imagine that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was standing when the Division was called; we had to imagine that he was wearing a hat when he was seated and raised a point of order, because he got that wrong; and we have to imagine that he is listening to the debate on reporting progress—a debate that was accepted on his motion.

Just to remind the Committee of what is happening, we are debating a three-clause Bill that fills one side of a sheet of paper. It is a debate which has been going on, in effect, for nearly a year, following a Second Reading in which the House, with a majority of well over 200, gave its blessing to the principle of the Bill. It is my belief that when we come to the Third Reading, we will have a majority of between 250 and 300.

I believe that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was right in saying that the Government's tactics were designed to divide hon. Members on the Conservative Benches who are flatly against the Bill, because they are flatly against the European Community; from the Labour party——

Mr. Wilkinson: No: it is about a referendum.

Mr. Bottomley: If my hon. Friend will listen to me with his ears, rather than use his mouth, for a moment, I will make my point.

The Government are trying—I think rightly—to divide those who are against the European Community from the Labour party, whose official policy is to support the Bill. When the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) ended his speech with a great shout about the powers that he believed were to be transferred to the European Community, he was shouting against the official policy of the Labour party.

One of the difficulties for people trying to follow these debates is that they get the impression that the Labour party has lost its principles over Europe. They expect the Labour party to be opposed to Europe. The Labour party has changed its policy, but many of its supporters and many of its Back Benchers reject that change of policy. That is why the present leader of the Labour party, who in the late 1970s voted against his party when it was opposed to the European Community, is now supporting the European Community against some of the votes in the Committee that would make it possible for us to endorse the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

I believe that it comes down to the disappointment of those who expected to get approval of new clause 75, or at least to have a jolly good row and argument about it, and would have lived with the fact that they could not get a vote on amendment No. 27. Now that they have heard that the Government are minded to accept new clause 75, they are in a similar position to Lord Denning, I think it was, who, when he heard that the House of Lords had upheld his view on an appeal, shook his head sadly and said that he still thought that he was right.

My view is that those who are desperately keen to use the social chapter element to try to wreck the progress of this Bill through the House are in great fear that, by getting a vote on the social chapter after the Bill has had its Third Reading, they will have to decide whether to vote against the social chapter, which they are against, or to vote for it in the hope that it will do more damage.

In the mid-1980s I was asked by a Belgian Minister why so many people in Britain opposed the fifth company directive and Vredeling—in effect, the predecesors of the social chapter. I said that half the people who opposed them had never read them, and the other half had read them. He said that nobody had ever explained it to him that clearly before.

We have to accept that the social chapter does not apply to people in most white collar occupations; the limits on hours and the like do not apply to European Commissioners. The social chapter applies only to working people, who are the ones who get the overtime from the extra hours.

The fact that the Labour party is arguing for that and being joined by some of my hon. Friends demonstrates clearly that the Committee ought not to pass this motion, but that we ought to make progress by returning to the new clauses and amendments, and to the Bill itself. I hope that within a few weeks we shall be able to say to the country, as I say to my association, that the Bill should be passed and we should go on trying to build a better future for this country in partnership within Europe.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I have one basic proposition to offer in support of the motion that the Committee report progress. As a relatively new Member—although I do not know how long one can continue to describe oneself as new—I found the contribution of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) very flippant. I believe that all hon. Members, irrespective of their points of view, must recognise that there are serious and fundamental issues at stake.

If new clause 75 was ever a time bomb—with all due respect to my hon. Friends, I doubt that—it has become a damp squib. That is because we have had a shameful example of manoeuvring by the Government this afternoon and we should not be duped by it.

Many of us were in the Committee, Mr. Morris, when you took your original decision and I do not believe that any rules were breached. I believe that your decision was reached in good faith and that you continue to operate in that way. When the decision was referred to by right hon. and hon. Members at that time, you beseeched us to read new clause 75 before making up our minds.

[Mr. George Stevenson]

I left the Committee worried about this, but nevertheless prepared to accept that you had taken the view that this fundamental issue of the social chapter needed to be debated and voted on by the Committee and by the House. You had decided that new clause 75 made it possible to meet this objective and was therefore the new clause that should be voted on. But there was never any doubt in my mind—although I am prepared to accept your advice, Mr. Morris, and that of hon. Members with more experience than I have—that the Committee wanted to vote on the clause concerned with the social chapter.

We are now to be denied that right and I am not prepared to consider satisfactory the point made by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who said that there would perhaps be an opportunity at Report stage for this vital issue to be resurrected. There is no guarantee of that, as right hon. and hon. Members have said. Therefore, this fundamental issue will remain subject to a decision that may or may not allow the will and wishes of the House—or allow the will and wishes of your good self, Mr. Morris, as you took the original decision—to be expressed through a vote.

6.30 pm

Mr. Cash: As the hon. Gentleman has recalled the suggestion made by the Chairman of Ways and Means that he should read new clause 75 with more care, did he also note that the Chairman said of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham):

> "I have given a substantive answer and made an offer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads new clause 75 with a little more care."—[*Official Report*, 30 March 1993; Vol. 222, c. 164.]

In other words, there was a supposed trade-off being offered between amendments Nos. 27 and 75. The Chairman went on, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), to say: "I listen to submissions." In other words, we can now make indirect submissions through the debate, and that will, I hope, be an oppportunity for the Chairman to listen to the respectful remarks currently being made.

Mr. Stevenson: I am prepared to accept the hon. Gentleman's reading of the record because that is a matter of fact, but I cannot accept or otherwise the interpretation he puts on it, as I am sure he will understand.

In all the deliberations of the Committee on this fundamental issue, there has never been any doubt that, one way or another, it must be voted on. I wanted a vote on amendment No. 27 because it had been debated at length. In my naivety, perhaps, I thought that that would be the case as, I have no doubt, did the Government at that time. I agreed entirely with the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) about new clause 75, which I have read on many occasions. I certainly do not agree with the interpretation of many right hon. Members and hon. Members that it is an alternative to amendment No. 27. Nevertheless, one is prepared to accept that there are different points of view. I repeat that in all this discussion there has never been any doubt that a vote should be taken.

The machinations of certain hon. Members, who want to sweep the issue under the carpet and to pretend that nothing has happened so we should continue with the debates, are not good enough. If such machinations had happened in local authorities, those same hon. Members would be jumping to their feet and condemning those local authorities as undemocratic. That is what we are in danger of becoming here.

I hope that the motion will be supported. If there was ever a time that the Committee needed to stand back and to reflect on what was happening and to what we were being asked to agree, this is it. I beseech the Committee to support the motion. Let us reflect on the situation, which has changed as a result of what I consider to be the quick and clever manoeuvre by the Government of seeking to support new clause 75.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: We are debating a motion to report progress. For me, progress has been too rapid. Earlier, Mr. Morris, you drew attention to the number of days during which the Bill has been debated in Committee. I reflect that we had, for example, fewer than six hours on citizenship. That is the most profound concept, which touches on who we are and what we are about—the very nature of our society. Yet in 1981, when you and I were both Members of Parliament, Mr. Morris, we spent 51 days on the British Nationality Bill, with a guillotine, and with three days on Report. How can anyone think that 22 or 23 days is sufficient to discuss the nature of the British constitution, which is fundamental to our view of democracy, and how we control the laws, the Government and the instruments of power in our society?

The Government send junior Ministers to argue what they claim is their central policy—the ratification of Maastricht. We should remember that the intent of the ratification of Maastricht is to remove beyond the call of the British people and the British voter powers to affect the central finances of their state. That will determine their levels of employment, their interest rates, output and deflation which are central to the control of the civil society of the United Kingdom.

Intolerant Members say, "How outrageous it is that we have spent as many as five hours discussing this point." I am glad that the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is here. Now that I have him in my sights, I know that he is attending part of the debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That is a cheer. All too often the impatient outside are those who are not prepared to attend the debate inside. They can therefore announce that these are trivial matters. In fact, the Bill contains acceptance of the concept that its measures should be irrevocable and irreversible. There is no mechanism in the Bill for winding back its provisions, despite the disaster of the exchange rate mechanism.

An important point worries me about your ruling, Mr. Morris. I share the view of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The House of Commons and its Committees must be able to discuss everything, including the conduct of the Chair. That point is at the heart of how we satisfy the needs of our constituents. I do not make the point lightly. When I watch the progress of business—I know that I must have misunderstood, Mr. Morris—I have seen you share the attention of the Deputy Chief Whip, I have seen you looking at the clock at quarter to the hour and I have seen a nod go between you. I foolishly conceived that as an agreement that there would be an acceptance of a closure motion. I know that that must be

wrong, so I make the point with diffidence. However, the watching of each day and the timing of each debate has caused us to gallop through some of the most profound concepts.

We had a Home Secretary who was not quite sure whether the Queen became a citizen. He saw no reason why not. The matter is taken with that amount of levity. We are talking profoundly about our institutions; that is all that the debate has been about. That is why, when we argue our contentions, we think that it is appropriate and proper that the Bill should have been proceeded with at a more gentle pace. The constitution of the United States was not formed in 22 days. The Government, no less, cannot send more than two Cabinet Ministers—their Front-Bench team—to argue propositions that affect the nature of our constitution. I am afraid that that approach has characterised the debate.

The principle, which I raised with the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), to whom I am extremely grateful for introducing this debate, that the Chair may now not accept amendments that would allow us to vote on finance during the passage of the Finance Bill is important. What is left to us of our control over the economy will require us from time to time to vote on it. Yet no Minister makes much of that. Ministers say that these are not considerable matters.

Our argument is that this is not finally a matter for the House of Commons, because we are only the surrogates for the people out there. I, like all hon. Members, stand here because people voted for me. We are trying now to take away the effectiveness of that vote. That decision should be taken solemnly, yet we cannot table an amendment requiring a referendum because, we are told, there is no money resolution. That is curious, because the Bill is an amendment to an earlier Act that had a money resolution.

We asked the Government how, if amendment No. 27 were passed, they could pay money to the other 11 parties, outside the treaty itself. How could that be? How is it that two answers are sometimes cited? One is that the original money resolution of 1972 gives authority for every subsequent payment and therefore will be paid out of the Consolidated Fund. Yet when I or any hon. Member says that there should be a referendum, we then have to go round the most fanciful track, play cat and mouse with the Chair, go upstairs to Mr. McKay to seek advice and we are then told that it can only be done in a courted and difficult manner. Why can we not be direct on such an important matter?

If the ruling stays or sticks, the country and the House, until such time as the powers are transferred, can have no certainty that it can earnestly, properly and appropriately discuss the business of the British people. The Government are prepared to cast away the powers by which they may save them.

When we come to the Budget, which concerns after all the bill for the exchange rate mechanism, and the finance for all the extra costs on electricity and gas because of coal that have to be paid for by pensioners, all those costs result from the Bill and the ERM.

We know full well that the ERM, on the day's negotiations and failures of businesses, costs between £10 billion and £20 billion. We are hoping to raise on that wretched energy measure, which is a temporary, emergency expedient on 17·5 per cent. of fuel bills, only about £6 billion or £7 billion over three years. It is nonsense, yet, to save the concept of Maastricht, we are prepared to expend the wealth and well-being of ordinary people in Britain.

We are raising taxes, we are setting aside election pledges that we solemnly gave because of the effects of the ERM, yet because we have progressed the Bill in the way that we have, how do we discuss the ERM? I did not get to speak on it—of course not. In debate after debate, many hon. Members have failed to get the opportunity to speak, and that is in Committee. Ministers tell us that they do not intend to give way to people who want to wreck the Bill.

Let us look at the sequence of the Bill. We are told that we have had an important vote on it. During the general election the treaty was not available in English. It was not published until one week before Second Reading. All the new Members, who now form a large part of the House, had one week in which to weigh the contentions. The Government claim, by some amazing transference, that a mandate was secured on something that the public could not have read, even if they had wished to read it.

Now that we come to take the matter seriously—I have tried to be a serious member of the Committee and have sat through the long hours, and tried to move or help my hon. Friends move amendments to be debated—we have not been called. We are told by the Chair that because we have not debated the issue on which we have not been called, we are not allowed to vote on it although it was in a group of amendments and we made references to it or tried to vote on it under an umbrella.

I return to citizenship, on which we spent less than six hours, and again I use the comparison of the British Nationality Act 1981. How much more trivial that was because of one important difference—we could change it. If we got it wrong, the House had the power to call it back, but under this Maastricht nonsense, what is the mechanism by which we may call it back?

If there is anger in my speech, it is at the facetiousness with which the Committee is treated, when I see new Members such as the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) getting red in the face and pointing to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and shouting out, "You are finished, Bill Cash." Why? Because an hon. Member wished to raise matters that are meant to be disposed of for ever, not just for this year or next year, not determined by a general election, as all that has been swept aside.

We are shifting our seat of government from the control of the people to an unelected bureaucracy, a Council of Ministers that meets in secret who will rule on transport, education and the whole range of apparatus of the state, including setting up an independent central bank well beyond the call of any one individual nation.

When we grind on about the consequences of the ERM and when the Government bring it back in the middle of the night, as they did two weeks ago, and when they guillotine it like this, I learn one thing from the progress of the debate. I think that the guillotine is God-awful. The Government used to tremble before they introduced it because it is an abatement of the freedom of speech of the House which is the representative of freedom of speech. I have now seen that, with a compliant Chairman of Ways and Means, one can effect the guillotine much more by the closure.

I say all those things advisedly because I have had 22 days to reflect on progress and there is no purpose to my being in the House if I cannot speak clearly, loudly and

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

honourably the beliefs that I hold for my nation. If I cannot do that, and if we are closed down, the process of today whereby a clear precedent is being set means that, if we are ever in opposition and wish to vote on something, the Chairman of Ways and Means, on a matter affecting the finance and taxation of the people, may say no.

6.45 pm

Dr. John Cunningham *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 556, Noes 9.

Division No. 231] **[6.45 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Adley, Robert
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chisholm, Malcolm
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cran, James
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell

Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S.
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pendry, Tom
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Richardson, Jo
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Sir Keith
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Cryer, Bob
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lewis, Terry
Marlow, Tony
Redmond, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. Andrew Rowe.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Question put accordingly and agreed to.
Committee report Progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it not an extraordinary event in the House of Commons that at the end of a Committee stage, the Government fail to produce tellers, having shouted in the

[Mr. George Robertson]

first instance against the motion? Can the country outside reflect on the seriousness of Her Majesty's Government not even having the courage to produce tellers to allow a vote to proceed with their own business? Given that already today they have announced that they will not contest new clause 75 or oppose amendment No. 420, are they not a Government in minority, without authority who now run away from every possibility of being defeated on the Floor of the House?

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair.

Dovelands School (Leicester)

7.10 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the problems of Dovelands school in my constituency. I am relieved to be doing so now, rather than in the early hours of the morning—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is extremely discourteous to the hon. and learned Member who is speaking if hon. Members make a great deal of noise when leaving the Chamber. Will they please leave quickly and quietly?

Mr. Janner: Noise or no noise, I rejoice at the opportunity to raise the matter on the Adjournment now, rather than in the early hours of the morning. Whatever little one may have to thank the railroad strikers for, at least we have the knowledge that, together, Government and Opposition Members have conspired to debate the Adjournment at such an early hour.

It is a tradition that on the Adjournment Back-Bench Members can raise the problems of one comparatively small school in one constituency. Even so, in this case those problems are reflected in all constituencies, for I doubt whether there is one in the country that does not have a school that is afflicted with the misery suffered by the Dovelands school in Leicester, West.

What is wrong with the school? There is certainly nothing wrong with the teaching, the pupils or the parents. On the contrary, it is a very fine school. The buildings in which the pupils are taught—the places where the teachers work and the children are required to learn—are the problem. I have visited the school dozens of times since I was elected 23 years ago. It is a happy place, but the school has been allowed to develop through a series of what are called temporary mobile classrooms. I suppose that they are temporary, in the sense that we are all temporary on this earth, but they are about as temporary as the prefabs were. You might just remember the prefabs from your youth, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am referring to a temporary joy which seems to go on for ever, and as it goes on, the classrooms deteriorate. Indeed, some of them are so bad that I have seen them propped up with timbers in the winter, with water dripping in, with damp on the walls and with windows that do not open. One of the temporary mobile classrooms is a caravan that was donated by the parents.

Another, believe it or not, is the sole place in the school where the children can gather. Because the floor of that building is defective, because heaters have had to be fixed and because there are no proper fire exits, only about 100 children of the 300 to 400 in the school are allowed in there at a time. Because it is so defective, the much-praised national curriculum cannot be taught because PE cannot be conducted in the classroom. In other words, four out of five pupils in the school are taught in temporary permanent mobile classrooms that were built in the 1930s.

All 350 pupils at the school use outside lavatories, whatever the weather, and that is a disgrace. There is no sick room in the main part of the school, a perfectly good building that has been allowed to decay. With the windows unopened, roofs leaking and floor damp and uneven, it is the sort of school to which none of us would want our children to go. And that is the real test. If hon. Members

said, "It is the sort of building in which our children can be educated," it would be fine for our constituents' children. But if we say, "We will not let them go there because it is unhygienic, below standard and, above all, dangerous," the place is not fit for the children of our constituents.

I will describe some of the dangers. One of the heaters in the so-called main hall caught fire. The caretaker entered the place a few weeks ago to find it filled with smoke. A defective heater had caused another fire. Instead of replacing the classroom, they replaced the heater. A chunk of copper piping about 3 ft long fell from one of the gutters into the playground just after the children had gone back into the school. It would have killed an adult, let alone a child.

I had been planning a wicked little enterprise. The piece of piping is on its way to Parliament. It was due to arrive here at about 9.30 in time for the 10 o'clock Adjournment debate. It was to have been smuggled gently into the Chamber through the main doors and, though fearing a rebuke from you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hoped to show the object to the House. It is so dangerous and defective that hon. Members would have appreciated to the full, from seeing it, why the parents of the children who go to the school are up in arms, why the teachers, governors and parents have prepared a parliamentary petition and why the local councillors, whatever their political parties, have come together and said, "We cannot allow this to go on."

I may be asked what good an Adjournment debate is in such circumstances. At least it gives us a chance to explain to Parliament what is going on in a school that is representative of many thousands of schools for which there is insufficient money. We are able, as a result of the debate, to continue the campaign of the parents, governors and teachers to get action before there is tragedy. I hope that the Minister who will reply to the debate will give hope to the school and will assure those who run it and work in it that they will be looked after.

Naturally, I have written to various Ministers about the situation at the school. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote telling me:

"We are very concerned about the state of Dovelands School."

I was glad to hear that, and when asked what he intended to do about it, he wrote:

"This Government is committed to improving the condition of school buildings generally."

That is fine. They intend to improve matters generally; but what about specific problems? If the Government are so committed to improving school conditions and buildings, they should provide money to enable Leicestershire county council and the local education authority to fix Dovelands school.

But the Government blame the members of the local authority and say, in effect, "They have their money and it is up to them to decide how to use it," and the local authority says, "Blame the Government. They do not give us enough money to fix the school, so we cannot do the necessary work." The Government blame the local authority, which blames the Government. The result is that the school is a danger. It is not a worthy place in which children can or should be taught.

What is to happen? The LEA says, "We hope to allocate money in due course, when we have it. We cannot do anything just now because we do not have the cash." I say on behalf of the parents, teachers, pupils and governors that that is not good enough. A commitment to improve the buildings in time will not do. If the Government do not believe that it is a top priority to have school buildings in proper condition, I do not know what is.

It is more important to have school buildings safe than to spend millions of pounds on testing children against the wishes of their teachers, or even in accordance with their teachers' wishes. I am referring to a job that must be tackled at once. The director of education wrote to me saying:

"The Dovelands project is not the highest current priority, although much needed, as a handful of schools are considered to be even more urgently in need of major investment."

One wonders what they are like. If Dovelands is not the worst, the worst must be an appalling slum and an incredible danger.

The Government say that they are concerned about Dovelands, but they do nothing but blame the local authority. The director of education is deeply concerned about the school, but has reported that no money will be available until 1995 at the earliest, and he blames the Government. Each blames the other and nobody gets anything done. Everybody throws up his hands and says, "It is not us. Blame someone else."

I have a horror that stems from an incident in Braunstone, where we begged for a new road to be made safe. No one would spend the money. The Government blamed the local authority, and the highway authority blamed the Government. There was then an awful tragedy when a child in my constituency was killed on that road. Local parents protested, as I did, and within months the money appeared out of thin air so that there would not be another tragedy.

I do not want the same to happen with Dovelands school. I do not want the authorities to wait until there is a tragedy—until there is a fire. In one of the early fires at the school, a child's sari was set alight. By a miracle, she was fine and survived. In another incident, a child had just entered a classroom when guttering fell that could have killed the child. Are we waiting for another tragedy? Then, I guarantee, the local education authority would find the money and the Government would contribute.

We ought not to wait for tragedies. We ought to act now. Dovelands is a fine school with a great reputation. It has an excellent, kind and tremendous head teacher. It has a devoted staff and governors who care about the school. The school has lovely pupils in a happy atmosphere. But no one should be forced to teach or to learn in a crumbling school that is in a disgraceful, dangerous condition. There should be action before there is a tragedy.

7.21 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I pay tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) for raising this important subject. Having worked with my hon. and learned Friend in Leicester for a number of years, I am well aware—as are his constituents—of his great concern for the education system. He spoke eloquently, as always, about the problems that affect Dovelands school. I am happy to support his excellent work.

Not long ago, we jointly campaigned on behalf of another Leicestershire school, Abbey primary school. My hon. and learned Friend's remarks were very much a

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

reflection of that campaign. His description of Dovelands school reflected also the problems that are to be found in the city of Leicester—crumbling schools, and the inability of the local authority to provide resources to make those schools safe. One cannot underestimate the effect of the condition of those schools on the morale of teachers, ancillary staff and the children themselves.

If we want to produce good citizens for the future, we must do exactly as my hon. and learned Friend says—provide resources to create the climate and conditions that will enable our children to be taught in schools that are happy places in which their education and skills can be developed and enhanced.

I hope that the Minister will accede to my hon. and learned Friend's requests. Is it not true that the resources made available by the Government to Leicestershire county council have declined in real terms over the past few years? That is not the fault of the local authority. Recently, it had to set a budget that will unfortunately mean education cuts. The Labour group was in the forefront of the campaign to ensure that there were no cuts—but that local authority and others throughout the country are having to cut back expenditure on repairing schools and stopping them from falling further into decay as a result of cuts in Government expenditure.

When the Government refuse to make available the resources necessary to allow local authorities to undertake basic maintenance and repair work, the consequences are such as those described by my hon. and learned Friend, and young children—vulnerable members of our society—are put at risk.

I admire greatly my hon. and learned Friend's campaign following the death of a young girl in Braunstone. He said well before that tragedy that there ought to be sufficient traffic calming measures to ensure that there would be no accidents. Nobody listened. It was only after the campaign that followed the death of that unfortunate child that something was done.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give in and will award Leicestershire county council the resources that it needs. Perhaps he will even ring-fence them, to ensure that they are devoted to Dovelands school. There are many schools in my constituency, as in that of my hon. and learned Friend, that ought to be funded. I hope that the Minister will accede to my hon. and learned Friend's request and will grant the resources for which he has asked.

7.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on his good fortune in securing this Adjournment debate. It is a pleasure for me, as a fellow east midlands Member, to respond to his comments. I associate with those remarks the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), although I do not always agree with his comments as to where the blame might lay in this particular case. If it is not inappropriate, I extend my personal felicitations to the hon. Member for Leicester, East on his recent change of status.

Mr. Janner: And to his wife.

Mr. Boswell: Indeed—quite right.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West spoke eloquently about the poor condition of the school buildings and the impact that that has on pupils and teachers. That is clearly an unsatisfactory state of affairs. But his concerns would be more properly addressed to Leicestershire local education authority, which maintains those schools. The LEA is, accordingly, responsible for ensuring that the premises of county schools are safe, in good condition and suitable for their purpose.

Under the local authority capital finance system it is for Leicestershire to decide, within the level of resources available to it, how much to spend on education capital projects. Within that total it is again entirely for the county to decide which projects are priorities. If the Dovelands schools are judged pressing priorities, Leicestershire has the flexibility and the resources to refurbish or replace the buildings.

The hon. and learned Gentleman might find it helpful if I said a little more about how the capital finance system works. Local authorities are given permission to borrow up to a certain level to fund capital programmes for all their services, including education. This borrowing limit, the basic credit approval, is not, however, the limit on local authorities' capital spending. They can also, if they wish, use funds transferred from their revenue budgets for capital purposes. They are also able to invest capital receipts. Leicestershire and other LEAs can take advantage of the relaxation of the rules on the use of capital receipts announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. That effectively means that, until the end of this year, LEAs will be able to spend 100 per cent., rather than 50 per cent., of receipts realised, which will provide valuable additional capital resources for all LEAs.

Leicestershire's basic credit approval for 1993-94 of more than £14 million covers the capital requirements of all its services, not just education. It is calculated by reference to the individual annual capital guidelines—ACGs—issued for each of those services, including education. The county's education annual capital guidelines for the current year is just under £7 million.

In distributing the national total of annual capital guidelines to LEAs in 1993-94, we gave priority to three categories—commitments arising from projects allowed for under previous ACGs; the provision of new places in areas of population growth, which we term "basic needs"; and implementing cost-effective schemes to remove surplus school places.

Within the second priority category of basic need, we also cover projects that are termed exceptional basic need. They cover situations where school premises are no longer repairable in practice and where no alternative provision exists. Leicestershire made a small bid in that exceptional basic need category for part of the Dovelands junior school in 1993-94, which was accepted in its entirety. I shall return to that later.

After the three national priority categories are covered, the remaining ACG resources are largely distributed by formula to contribute towards the cost of improving existing school buildings. These national priority criteria were agreed with the local authority associations and retain the support of LEAs. How the categories are defined and details of how LEA bids will be assessed are set out each year in letters to LEAs inviting bids for ACGs. Generally speaking, these letters are issued in May or June.

The deadline for bids is usually in September or October and the ACGs are announced in December for the following financial year.

Leicestershire has done well under the system. Education ACGs alone have totalled over £22 million in the past three years, including the current financial year. While ACG bids from LEAs always exceed the total available, Leicestershire has received a much greater proportion of its bids than the national average—over 42 per cent. compared with the national average of 27 per cent. in the current year. In particular, the county has received substantial cover in the commitments and basic needs categories. In contrast, however, Leicestershire has made few bids in the other high priority category of surplus place removal projects. Reorganisation schemes which remove surplus places generate revenue savings. They also attract sufficient and significant capital support within ACGs for investment in improving the stock of existing premises.

I understand that the county currently has a significant number of surplus places, particularly in the secondary sector where it approaches 20 per cent. of the stock. Surplus places are a drain on the system. They take up resources which could be available for other uses, including refurbishment works. I hope that the county of Leicestershire will look carefully at this issue to see what savings can be made for reinvestment elsewhere.

The county has also done very well recently in the distribution of unallocated supplementary credit approvals. These are resources which are held back each year when annual capital guidelines are distributed in December. They are largely earmarked to cover projects arising from proposals to remove surplus places that have not yet been decided. As some of those proposals are rejected or withdrawn, the supplementary credit approvals are available for redistribution.

These unallocated resources are distributed to LEAs after careful consideration of the bids that have been received. Most of these relate to urgent refurbishment work at existing schools. In the 1991-92 financial year, the county's bid for these unallocated resources listed a number of schools where urgent work was necessary. Many LEAs submitted bids. Exceptionally, we were able to allocate supplementary credit approvals for work at three Leicestershire schools—Abbey primary, Marriott and Charnwood.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West will recall the problems at Abbey primary in particular. He made many representations on the problem that that school faced, as he has done about Dovelands schools. I am sure he appreciated the help that we were able to provide. The allocations for these three projects totalled over £2 million. Leicestershire also received an unallocated supplementary credit approval in 1992-93 for work at another Leicester school, Sir Jonathan North. Those schools were seen by the county as its most urgent priorities. The exceptional assistance that we have given for work at the schools should mean that the LEA is now better placed to carry out work at other priority schools.

In submitting the earlier bids, Leicestershire did not actually include the Dovelands schools. That is a matter for the county. It is, of course, open to Leicestershire to submit a bid for any unallocated supplementary credit approvals that there may be in the current financial year. Any such bids, including bids relating to the Dovelands schools, will be treated on their merits. This is an option that the LEA will want to consider carefully. No doubt the hon. and learned Gentleman and the hon. Member for Leicester, East will wish to press this possibility. The most important matter at this stage is for Leicestershire to decide what needs to be done at the schools. Having done so, it can then decide what time scale is preferred and what priority to give to the work.

I understand that the county's bid under the annual capital guidelines for 1993-94 included support for the removal of temporary buildings at Dovelands junior school. That bid was made in our high priority category of exceptional basic need. The bid was accepted in its entirety and support totalling £190,000 was therefore included in the 1993-94 annual capital guideline.

In the longer term, I understand that the LEA plans to provide both schools with new premises. I also understand however, that it remains undecided on how best to do that. I believe that the governors of both schools are currently being consulted on a number of options, including rebuilding on the same site or on a new site or sites.

Mr. Vaz: The House was moved by the description of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) of the current safety standards at Dovelands school. Surely the Minister accepts that the situation there is not dissimilar; in fact, it is worse than the situation that we described in support of the Abbey campaign. Why does the Minister have to wait for another bid? Why does not he accept what my hon. and learned Friend has said and treat the issue as a priority?

Mr. Boswell: As I have explained, it is for the local education authority to decide its priorities. As I have said, the LEA's priority was to go for the Abbey school and the other two schools first. At that time Dovelands was not mentioned, although it has been mentioned now.

Mr. Janner: We are back to the position that I outlined. The Minister says, "Blame Leicestershire local authority." When it is approached, it will say, "Blame the Government." Will the Minister at least undertake to send someone senior to see the school, to inspect it and consider whether there is the sort of danger that I have described? If there is, will the Minister please be kind enough to give some hope that the Government will intervene to assist? We are not talking politics, because nobody can get anything done at the school. This is a hung authority. It is a matter of humanity, kindness and decency to give some reassurance to the parents and not simply say, "Blame Leicestershire authority." Will the Minister undertake to send an inspector or someone else to look at the school, and will he give it some hope?

Mr. Boswell: I referred obliquely to statutory safety obligations on local authorities in relation to school premises. I am aware of the political situation in the county. I was extensively briefed by my officials about the local situation. I shall certainly draw this debate to the attention of the local education authority and see whether my officials are entirely satisfied that the authority is aware of the situation on the ground.

I do not resile from the principle that it is for the local authority to submit bids. We are not apportioning blame. There is a mechanism, which I have been at some pains to explain. The authority should avail itself of that

[Mr. Boswell]

mechanism, as it has done on previous occasions with success, and matters will then be considered on their merits.

Mr. Janner: I thank the Minister for giving way. We have until 10 o'clock, although we shall not take that long.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There a few rules, and they include brief interventions.

Mr. Janner: I have a brief question. Would the Minister be good enough to come with me to the school one day to see it for himself? I cordially invite him to get out of Westminster, away from his office. I assure him that he will get a much better reception than I did 23 years ago, during my first general election campaign, when I was booed in the playground. That does not happen any more, and the Minister will be well received if he comes.

Mr. Vaz: And we will buy him lunch.

Mr. Boswell: Even without that improper inducement, I am always interested in invitations such as that seductive one from the hon. and learned Gentleman. He may be aware that my colleagues and I, although I have other responsibilities in the Department, visit schools on a regular basis and have done so more than 100 times in the last calendar year. I have noted his invitation, and if he would care to put it into writing, I shall see whether I can respond to it. The schools are not all that far from my constituency. We shall see what we can do, but I am not going to commit myself to that, let alone promise a complete recasting of the rules in this case.

I believe that the governors of both schools are being consulted on a number of options, including rebuilding on the same site, or a new site or sites. A number of possible sites have been identified. Clearly, the matter now rests in the hands of the county and the governors.

Let me conclude by saying—the hon. and learned Gentleman has acknowledged this—that the Government are committed to improving the conditions of school buildings. We have provided LEAs with considerable resources in the past few years for them to do so. LEAs spent over £2 billion on school buildings between 1986-87 and 1989-90. Much of this will have gone on remedying deficiencies such as those at the Dovelands schools. In addition, we estimate that LEAs will spend a further £2·5 billion on schools between 1990-91 and 1993-94.

Clearly, the position at the Dovelands schools is unsatisfactory, but, at this stage, it is really a matter for the LEA and the governors. We have provided generous capital support for Leicestershire over the years. In particular, we have provided support for urgent work to renovate the premises of a number of Leicester city schools. The county has the resources available and the flexibility to put right the problems at the Dovelands schools if that is regarded locally as a priority.

Therefore, it is important that the LEA and the schools come to a decision on what precisely they need to do to tackle the problems. That is a matter for them. No doubt the hon. and learned Member will be pressing the LEA as hard and eloquently as he has pressed me tonight on this. There are a number of options open to the LEA. The county can submit a bid for unallocated SCAs during the current financial year. Any such bid would be treated on its merits.

It is also open to the LEA to bid for capital support for work at the schools as part of the normal round of bidding for annual capital guidelines for 1994-95. Any such bids will be considered carefully against the detailed criteria set out in our annual bidding letter to LEAs, which will be issued shortly.

I have listened carefully to arguments put by the hon. and learned Member and the hon. Member. I understand and share the concern that they and those associated with the schools must feel, but the onus now is on the county to decide how the problems are to be rectified and when, and to give the work concerned the necessary priority. The system is in place, and, according to the decisions they take, we are in a position to respond to it, in accordance with those provisions.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 16 April 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Local Government Services

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

9.33 am

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): It is a pleasure to introduce a full day's debate on local government. Local government matters a great deal. Good councils and good councillors can make a lot of difference to their counties, towns and districts. The Government are interested in promoting the best in local government and in leaving many vital issues to be settled democratically in the council chamber.

In recent months and years, the difference between the best-run and the worst-run councils has become marked. Successful Conservative councils get out of debt, collect their money efficiently, contract out and provide excellent value for money. Councils such as Wellingborough, Hambleton and Huntingdon are offering their taxpayers refunds in the current year because they have been so successful at managing. Hampshire county council has succeeded in setting the lowest county council tax, while at the same time recruiting more carers and teachers.

Some Labour councils, in contrast, set high council taxes, pile high the debts and fail to provide value for money. Those are the issues which electors will shortly be able to judge in the county campaigns.

The public sector that we wish to advance is there to organise services for those in need whom the market has passed by, to regulate the market so that it remains open and competitive, and to provide leadership and representation for communities. Good local government provides, or sees to it that there is provision for, care for the elderly and disabled. It plans our physical and built environment—for example, to prevent the noisy sawmill being located next to the old people's home. It acts as leader for the local community, creating a place in which people are prepared to invest, to create jobs and to enjoy their leisure time.

In the current year, local government will receive financial support from Government grant and business rates of more than £33,000 million. My first message today is that plenty of choice and diversity is possible within that large sum of money. The House should remember that the money goes to local government in the form of a block grant, and councillors and councils are left to make the important decisions about how to spend that money, what the priorities should be and how efficiently it delivers the services.

The private sector is there to supply wants. It is there to make money, as profits are the lifeblood of new enterprise and the means of remunerating savers, and to provide the funds to invest in new plant and equipment. Without profits, businesses cannot innovate or adapt to changing customer needs, and they soon fall behind with the provision of opportunity and employment in their local communities.

Throughout my business and political life, I have found things of excellence in both the public and private sectors. As a one-time chairman of an industrial company, as a former director of a merchant bank, as a previous director of small companies, I learned a great deal about the best that the private sector can offer. I learned to admire its flexibility, its speed of reaction, its preparedness to take calculated risks, its ability to make decisions in an uncertain world with imperfect information, its attention to detail, its ability to put the customer first, second and third, its interest in quality and its enthusiasm for new ideas and for innovation.

As a senior civil servant, as a Government adviser and, more recently, as a Minister, I admire the public sector at its best, when it is judicious, fair-minded and open, and prepared, before acting, to debate the issues before the people, capable of helping those most in need and giving hope to those whom the competitive market leaves to one side.

Sometimes, in both sectors, life does not work out for the best. In the private sector, there is the Labour party's caricature, where speed leads to sloppiness and the pursuit of profit can lead to spivvery. In the public sector, things can degenerate into bumf and bureacracy, where nothing happens for interminable months or years, where letters go unanswered, problems are unresolved, and instructions, regulations and counter-instructions are issued, as if half translated from Latin into a kind of official double-Dutch.

At its worst, the language of the private sector is costive or monosyllabic. At its worst, the prose of the public sector is shambolic, confused and inchoate. Language without cadence and clarity is good neither for governing nor for doing business.

The Conservative agenda followed over several years aims to make government work better. One of the biggest breakthroughs, in our approach to government came with the introduction of the idea of the enabling council. Such a council decides how much service the community requires, but does not necessarily itself employ all the people providing it. This idea, despite its somewhat ungainly name, has been adopted across the country by councils of differing political persuasions.

Many have come to recognise that business is better at organising service provision through a competitive market; only government can decide how much service and how many public goods to buy on behalf of people who lack the income to compete in the marketplace. So we believe that councils should make the best use of what the marketplace has to offer.

An increasing number of councils are pioneering putting services out to tender voluntarily before statute and regulation require them to do so. The London borough of Bromley has already market tested more than a third of its revenue costs. Lincolnshire county council is planning market testing of property surveying, project management and building maintenance. The London borough of Brent is entering on a vigorous programme of market testing. That usually results in better quality and in lower costs.

In the United States of America, part of President Clinton's new agenda have been christened "reinventing Government". The titles may be different from those that we are using, but it looks rather similar to what we are

[Mr. John Redwood]

doing here. His Administration, according to the proponents of the new agenda, want government to concentrate on steering rather than rowing; on leading societies instead of providing services themselves.

We are told that President Clinton wants government to provide competition between service providers and to empower citizens by pushing control away from bureaucracy into the community. The United States Administration wish to measure the performance of their agencies by not the amount of money that the agencies spend but the achievements that they record. The Administration wish government to be mission-driven rather than ruled by regulations. They wish to concentrate on preventing problems as much as on providing solutions; they wish to put energies into decentralising authority. Above all, they prefer market mechanisms to bureaucratic ones.

I therefore hope that, in responding to the debate, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) will tell us whether he and his party welcome those Democratic party initiatives in America. It is time we knew whether the Labour party is full of Clintonite reformers at its top or not. Are they now in favour of the market and what it can offer, or do they continue to pursue their vendetta against it?

Labour councillors in council chambers throughout England need to know the answer. They need to know where they are being led by the Labour party here in the House of Commons. Are they, like the President of America, to welcome competitive tendering and private partnership, or have they to resist doggedly and unsuccessfully our proposals for reform and improvement?

Public-private partnership in Britain has a long and successful history. It is not even something entirely dreamed up by successive Conservative Administrations since 1979, good though the ideas of those Administrations were. Its provenance goes back much further and its acceptability spans the political spectrum.

Although, in the 1980s, the Labour party nationally in the House fought tooth and nail against the idea of contracting out, around the country in practice some more sensible Labour-led councils were doing it, as they had been for many years. So we need to know whether the national party has caught up with that strand of thinking.

In a *Municipal Journal* piece, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North implied that the Labour party was catching up. He said, or was reported as saying:

"In principle, there is nothing wrong with local authorities deciding to what extent they are providers of services and to what extent they buy in the service to provide for their local residents".

Indeed, even the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who is sharper of tongue in such matters, seemed to announce his conversion to the advantages of contracting out in a recent interview in *Tribune*. I believe that there was some dispute about whether it accurately reflected his views, but the House might like to be reminded what *Tribune* thought he had said. I can understand the difficulties between a Labour Member and *Tribune*, but there we are. *Tribune* reported the hon. Member for Blackburn as believing:

"There is wide acceptance that the division between contractor and provider that compulsory competitive tendering has produced has been sensible".

That is praise indeed from the hon. Member for Blackburn.

Many members of the Labour party have recognised for a long time that contracting out and using the market can be sensible. It has rarely made sense for councils to employ top-rate barristers in case the council should be called into serious litigation; they have always relied on the marketplace when they need those skills.

It has rarely made sense for councils to employ their own financial and investment specialists. They have often called upon advisers in the City when and where they need them. Seeking provision from the marketplace is not simply a way of cutting costs or even dealing with the problem of peaks and troughs. It can also be a way of improving service quality. Management of a service is usually strengthened, whether or not an outside group wins the contract, by the very process of competitive tendering.

This was well known in the 19th century, when the Government had a problem with the unreliability of their international mail service. The Government's solution then was to let mail contracts to private sector shipping companies. By so doing, they built incentives into the system to deliver the post. Many more letters were subsequently delivered rather than allegedly being "lost at sea", as had happened under the public sector monopoly.

Similarly, under modern contracting out, service quality has often been better specified for everything from dustbin collection through to the running of the local swimming pool. This service revolution, based on quality and the use of the market, will continue in the next few years. Central Government are now pitching in. They are contracting out many of their functions and grouping many of their staff into executive agencies and trading funds.

The problem in a large amorphous civil service can be that individual branches or divisions lack esprit de corps or a clear sense of purpose, swallowed as they are by a greater whole. Market testing allows the Minister to answer more precisely to Parliament for the policy and allows some responsibility to be clearly delegated to managers for the day-to-day running of the service.

Large organisations need delegated responsibility, as well as the buck resting on the desk of the most senior person for the big issues. The idea that the Minister is directly responsible for every facet and every action, every letter written, every benefit administered by local government is Labour nonsense that we often hear from the Opposition.

Of course the Minister in Parliament should be responsible for the general policy on local government, for the amount of money voted and for the framework of law. Parliament should expect to debate those matters vigorously and to criticise the Minister if it feels that he has failed to respond. But should the Minister be responsible for every benefit cheque that goes missing, every piece of litter in the local park or every poor school result?

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The Minister's last few sentences implied that local government should be given more opportunity to make its own decisions. Does he feel that they run counter to the Government's policy on capping and their view that local government is not able or sufficiently responsible to make those decisions?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman cannot have followed my earlier argument, in which I said that £33,000 million gave enormous choice, scope and discretion. I wish to strengthen the choice and scope of local councils in administering that money by encouraging responsibility in councils and reminding the Labour party that many of the issues should properly be debated in the council chamber and not brought to the House of Commons. Ministers should not be blamed for matters that are clearly within the competence and responsibility of the local authority.

In the many layers of management between the park attendant failing to pick up the litter and the Secretary of State for the Environment, responsibility is held by people elected or appointed, who can and should often be held to blame. In a vigorous democracy, an Opposition will naturally wish to blame the Minister for everything. In their view, everything can be related to the amount of money available and the Minister can always be blamed for the total amount of money.

The Opposition in this Parliament, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North has just shown, delight in arguing two entirely contradictory propositions. They argue that local government should be independent, but, at the same time, they bring every shortcoming to local government to the House, claiming that it has happened only because the revenue support grant was not large enough. They should learn that the obverse of the coin of local autonomy is local responsibility.

Many councils throughout the country are managing well within the large block grants allocated to them. The question is, why cannot the others do so and what will the Labour party do to encourage better management of some of the Labour-controlled councils that claim that they cannot manage so well?

Within budgets of £70,000 million this year, local government has considerable scope to do good and great opportunity to make mistakes. Believing in local freedom underlines that. The adoption of more businesslike practices can make partnership between public and private sectors easier. The partnership must extend, especially in the inner cities, to creating a climate in which business can invest and prosperity can return. Exciting new developments are now under way, with the provision of private sector roads, railway lines and other transportation systems, through the development of joint venture projects and private sector projects in their entirety.

The link of the world's busiest international airport, Heathrow, to one of the world's largest cities went unmade by the nationalised industry over 45 years. Private capital will put that right. Even the shadow Secretary of State for Transport, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), welcomes the principle behind that development——

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): My hon. Friend proposed it.

Mr. Redwood: That comment is a bit rich. The Labour party spent the whole of the early 1980s claiming that the private sector was full of rogues and villains and had no role to play in such developments. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and his hon. Friends have learnt from what we have been saying over the past 10 or 20 years —that the private sector has a role and that private capital can be most important.

The public sector's task is to handle the community's aspirations and fears and to provide the necessary permits and rights. Some of the projects may well need some public financial assistance. The public sector may need to be involved in acquiring the land, granting planning permission, debating with local communities on the best routes and deciding on the correct mixture of facilities that can be provided as a result of a regeneration scheme. Such thinking lay behind the Government's launch, earlier this year, of the capital partnership and housing partnership funds. Those funds have been very successful in attracting three-way money—a three-way partnership—between central Government, local government and the private sector.

The capital partnership scheme for the inner cities, through £20 million of promised Government grant, promises £33 million of local authority receipts money and £130 million of private capital. It is a big boost for the winning areas in deprived inner cities. The housing partnership fund, with £30 million of promised Government grant, promises £29 million of local authority receipts money and £37 million of private investment. Those partnership schemes show how private and public sectors can work together in the best interests of urban regeneration.

In the Foleshill area of Coventry, £2·6 million of urban partnership grant will be used alongside other central Government grants and almost £17 million of private sector investment to redevelop a former warehouse, textile factory and other sites, to provide workshops, light industrial units, new private and housing association dwellings and training opportunities. More than 2,000 new jobs have been promised from that scheme alone.

In Southwark, the local authority is using £5 million of its capital receipts, alongside £1 million urban partnership funding, to bring in an estimated further £5 million of private sector money to regenerate central Peckham. That project is a good example of private-public sector partnership which will increase retain space and improve leisure facilities and the environment for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

In Huddersfield, slightly more than £1 million urban partnership resources are expected to attract more than £23 million from the private sector, which, together with more than £3 million of local authority capital receipts, will provide a major retail and leisure park. That ambitious and imaginative project will develop sports facilities with regional, national and international potential.

The present state of the property market presents enormous opportunities. I asked property specialists when they thought that they would next be able to buy properties and undertake developments at current high yield levels and current low interest rates. Why did so many clamour to buy land at £1 million or more an acre in 1988, which they would now turn down at £250,000 an acre? Is not it time for them to think again and recognise the opportunities? There has rarely been a better conjunction of rental yields and borrowing costs.

The economy is growing again and, as we approach the middle 1990s, there will be demand from tenants for commercial space and industrial property in our major cities. There will be more demand for affordable homes from a new generation of potential home owners.

Central Government, urban development corporations, councils and city challenge partnerships can sketch

[Mr. Redwood]

the ideas and point the direction. The private sector can respond by recognising the opportunities and by working in tandem with public bodies. We now have some experience of our city challenge rounds. Taking the two rounds together, and adding up the promises, we recognise that they can make a huge difference to the inner city areas that they are targeting.

The 31 city challenge winners are forecasting, over five years, 70,000 new or improved dwellings; 91,000 new jobs being created; the improvement and reclamation of 2,831 hectares of land; more than 3 million sq m of new and improved business and commercial space and 7,000 new business start-ups. They anticipate bringing in more than £3,000 million of private sector investment. That is a huge task and those projects alone will make a very big difference to large areas of our inner cities. I am sure that that will be as welcome to the Opposition as it is to me.

Great cities are not built on public grants alone. The period of urban expansion in the Victorian era saw the erection of some great municipal buildings, but mostly the architectural and commercial fabric of the city came from vigorous and competitive private enterprise. The era of maximum expansion of the railroads came in a period of private capital provision. All the canals, all the main railway lines and many of the original turnpikes were built using private money. The comely inheritance of red brick warehouses, private quays and Victorian suburban villas showed the vigour of the private sector, organised within a planning and public utility framework set out by central and municipal government.

Partnership unleashes a variety of decision makers and a variety of tastes, styles and approaches. Variety is important to the architectural, cultural and street life of urban England. Just how drab Government and local government patronage in London can be is seen in the construction of the concrete festival hall, the Marsham street towers and the tower blocks of the east end. In contrast, how lively are the colours, shapes and forms of many of the new docklands developments on the Isle of Dogs and in Surrey Quays and Wapping, as the private sector has unleashed new architectural talent.

Two weeks ago, a new UDC began its life in Plymouth. The public sector brings organisational skills, planning, former Ministry of Defence land and the fine collection of buildings of the Royal William yard. Today, I announced two further appointments to the UDC board, making a total so far of nine directors—five from the local authorities and four representing industry, commerce and other interests. The chief executive post has been advertised and the chairman will be making the appointment shortly.

I want the private sector to bring forward the money and the ideas to create cafes, restaurants, pubs, hotels, small business workshops and offices, where before the Royal Navy victualled her ships. In the dying days of naval occupation, the Royal William yard lost some of its lustre. It was closed off from the people of Plymouth and it became a sad outrider overlooking the Sound. With the right partnership of Government, the city council and the private sector, this decade will see the renaissance of the Royal William yard, its return to the people of Plymouth for their use and the creation of a new centre of enterprise, jobs and prosperity. Plymouth is most definitely open for business. I now want the private sector to come forward with its ideas and its money.

Such partnerships are already working in many other parts of the country. In Manchester, public-private partnership is redeveloping Victoria station, and £35 million of Government money in the form of city grant will provide the Olympic arena. It will generate almost £200 million of private sector capital in the associated commercial, retail and leisure development, offering a five-star hotel, cinema, substantial office accommodation and other facilities.

Mr. Henderson: I understand that the Minister is proud of some developments in certain parts of the country, but does he accept that the way in which the Canary Wharf project in the east end of London was put together, and the Government's action in ignoring the advice of the local authorities and local people, made a major contribution to that scheme's failure? That failure is reflected in the fact that only 15 per cent. of Canary Wharf is occupied.

Mr. Redwood: Sometimes, risks are run that take time to come right. If the hon. Gentleman and I were to return to Canary Wharf in five or 10 years, we should see a flourishing and successful development, with many more tenants and businesses. I hope that the hon. Gentleman joins me in wishing those involved every success in letting that space and in developing more businesses to fill it. That will mean an even more flourishing and enterprising London and City of London economy.

Under the partnership envisaged for the Manchester concert hall site, public money could build the concert hall if the private sector could construct the offices and other facilities to complete the scheme.

At the heart of the Manchester Olympic bid is a further bold regeneration project. Many facilities will be constructed on the Eastlands site—an old industrial area in need of attention. The private sector will be harnessed to provide hotel spaces, car parks and much of the housing. There will be a lasting monument to the Olympics and facilities for the continued enjoyment of Manchester and her people.

Of more immediate interest to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North, the partnership on Teesside and Tyneside has taken off through the work of the urban development corporations. They successfully transformed the Tees and Tyne from rundown, derelict areas into serious locations attracting new businesses from England and around the world. The waterfront by the Tyne bridge is being completely reconstructed and the new business park has several leading companies as its tenants. New houses, new waterside facilities and a new university are all rising from the old mudflats and rundown land alongside the two great rivers of the north-east.

For partnership to flourish, local and national government need to be more responsive and alert to opportunities. The private sector needs more courage and confidence after a bruising recession, and a willingness to respond to the new climate. To the private business I say, now get ready to run the risks. To the Government I say, let us make sure that nothing that we do locally or nationally impedes enterprise, success and regeneration —for the wind is at last set fair for prosperity.

10.2 am

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I welcome this debate, initiated by the Government, on the provision of public services, which Opposition Members believe is a crucial part of our way of life throughout the country.

The Government claim that changing the balance between the public and private provision of local authority services is all about the delivery of those services. They have systematically made that point over a long time, and it was repeated by the Minister this morning. The Government claim that their approach to further education, schools, economic development systems, residential provision and contracted services is all about the delivery of efficient services. The Government do not need me to remind them that their actions over the past 14 years have not been about the delivery of local government services.

I suggest that it has been the Government's motive all along, contrary to the Minister's statements this morning, to dismantle local government service, curtail local democracy and undermine public confidence in local government. The Government know that changing the balance is not about delivery but about centralising power in Whitehall. They know that removing local authority responsibility for further education and handing it over to self-perpetuating boards with funding controlled by a central Government quango is not about the delivery of service.

The Government know that taking economic development and planning powers from local authorities and handing them to unelected boards with funding controlled by central Government is not about the delivery of service. They know also that changing social security rules to give an unfair advantage to private residential homes, which has led to the closure of local authority homes, is not about the delivery of service. The Government know that forcing local authorities to dismantle essential services and to hand them over to private contractors, who often then cut staff pay and conditions, is not about the delivery of service. They know that their latest idea of taking away the limited responsibility that local authorities have in respect of police facilities is not about the delivery of police facilities.

Mr. Redwood: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why senior Labour councillors come every year to see the holder of my office or the Secretary of State for the Environment to say that in the ensuing year they need considerably more money to deal with all the extra responsibilities that Parliament and the Government have asked them to adopt? How does that square with care in the community, environmental and other measures that the Government have added to local government responsibilities in the past? If the hon. Gentleman's thesis is correct and local authorities have fewer responsibilities, why do councillors argue that they need more money to meet extra responsibilities?

Mr. Henderson: The Minister does not need me to answer that question because he knows the answer himself. If there is any economic growth over a period of time—and even under a Conservative Government there has been some, though not as much as in the 1970s—there must also be growth in public sector expenditure. Local authority leaders such as Jeremy Beecham, on my own council, have been knocking on the Minister's door because the damage done—as in Tyneside and Newcastle—by Conservative policies over the past 10 years has produced many more calls on local government to ameliorate that damage, to make life better for the people in their community.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the remark made by Jeremy Beecham in the *Municipal Journal* in May 1992 that

"compulsory competitive tendering has brought some cost effectiveness and genuine saving which might not otherwise have been achieved"?

Mr. Henderson: It will be better for the debate if I deal with the hon. Gentleman's question at the appropriate point in my speech. If I fail to do so, perhaps he will remind me of his question.

Government actions in taking power away from local authorities related to the provision of services and not to their delivery. I ask the hon. Gentleman to join me in expressing concern at the proliferation of quangos that have been established throughout the country to administer public services. In a democracy, the people best placed to judge the needs of a community and whether those needs are met are those elected by the community and who are accountable to it, yet democracy has been offended by an avalanche of public sector appointments.

In my district of Tyneside, it is well known that the same unelected people are often given four of five quango appointments on non-elected public boards. It is often said that many local Tory worthies on Tyneside have more appointments on unelected boards than there are air ticket promises in a Hoover salesman's pocket.

The Government know that few of their actions, whether establishing unelected public boards or contracting out public services, are ultimately about delivery. If the Government are honest, they should admit that all such moves challenge the concept that community provision has validity and local people have a right and ability to determine the level and nature of the services that they want. If the Government have any honesty, they will admit that those measures during the past 14 years of Tory government have been a cynical and systematic strategy to break up the power of, and services provided by, local authorities.

Will not the Government admit that the reason that they begrudge community provision is that, in many cases, it means more money for the ordinary, vast mass of people in this country than for the very rich? The Government find that inconsistent with the philosophy of "Put yourself first" in Tory Britain. Are not the Conservatives frightened of local democracy? They believe that it is a highly dangerous counterforce to central Government control, as it allows local people to be responsible for the policies in their communities. That policy often poses a direct challenge to both the position and views of Tory central Government.

The Minister said that he now felt more sympathetic towards local government. He recently issued a press release from his Department—on 25 March—containing the following welcome comment:

"Local Government is not just in the business of providing services. It should also be a natural leader of local communities."

Opposition Members would have no difficulty in supporting those sentiments.

Earlier this morning, the Minister said that he liked to refer to the 1970s and drew some comparisons between

[Mr. Henderson]

now and the 1970s, when his writings about local authorities and local authority provision were prolific. I am pleased to remind the House of what the Minister said about local authorities when he was a councillor in Oxfordshire in 1977, and pleased that the Government welcome further references to the 1970s. Writing in the "National Westminster Bank Review" in February 1977, he said:

"It would be quite possible to repeal community land legislation, to put an end to structure planning, to cease providing public recreational facilities, to cease policing trading standards and to abolish a whole range of local authority services . . . Radical reform"—

The Minister has a reputation as a radical—

"would include the cessation of all public housing and a return to market place decisions."

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Henderson: I see that those comments have the approval of some of the Minister's Conservative colleagues. The Minister was not content with those remarks, because the review continued:

"the welter of corn-dolly making courses and swimming pools"—

contrary to what he said this morning—

"are no longer feasible in the new financial climate."

Like me, the House may find it interesting to compare those views with those that the Minister now expresses. It may be helpful for the Minister to clarify his position. Is he now saying that he was right in 1977 when he said that it was possible to repeal community land legislation, end structure planning, cease providing recreational facilities, cease trading standards, cut out vocational evening classes, close swimming pools and abolish public housing? Is he saying that he was right then and is wrong now?

Mr. Redwood: Some of my words were prophetic because when the Conservative Government came into office they scrapped community land legislation, which was a tax on success and regeneration. The Conservative Government got rid of two-tier planning in London, which was an unnecessary and burdensome cost. In the conditions of 1976-77, when the article was written, the country was bankrupt thanks to the Labour Government, which meant pulling in our horns over some desirable schemes. Now that we have had many years of Conservative prosperity, we can take a more relaxed view of some of those matters.

Mr. Henderson: I do not know how the Minister has the gall to say that the country was bankrupt——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): We paid it all back.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Sedentary observations, particularly from the Front Bench, are to be deplored.

Mr. Henderson: I do not know how the Minister has the gall to say that the country was bankrupt in 1977 when unemployment was a third of what it is today, there was growth and the social fabric of our country was in much better health than it is today.

Is the Minister saying that he was right then and is wrong now, or is he saying that everything that he said then was wrong and the action that flowed from it, providing the philosophical base of Tory policy in the 1980s, was wrong? Is he saying that he now believes in local government and that the policies of the Conservative Government of the 1980s were at best inappropriate and, more likely, damaging to our British way of life? What is his real view of and honest position on local government and the provision of local government services? I am happy to give way to the Minister if he wishes to reply.

On the issue of the provision of resources for local authority demands in the current year, the Secretary of State for the Environment said on 26 November 1992 that "provided that local authorities manage their resources efficiently, they should be able to maintain the full range of services they provide."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 1011.]

There are now clearly cuts in services and jobs in many parts of the country as a result of the restrictions in the budget settlement. There are also cuts in services and job losses in many Conservative-controlled authorities.

Does the Minister agree with his boss, the Secretary of State? If he does, what is he saying to those Conservative-controlled authorities? What will he say to his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment about Barnet council, which faces a £7 million cut, and where a residential home has been closed and a day nursery has been threatened with closure? Is the Minister saying that what is happening in Barnet has everything to do with delivery? Is he saying that Barnet council is inefficient?

What is he saying to Enfield council, a Tory-controlled authority in north London, in which his hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) may be interested? That council faces a £10·7 million cut, 400 jobs have gone, the discretionary award scheme for students is being threatened, and the youth service is being threatened with cuts. Is the Minister saying that Enfield council is inefficient and that that is why it finds itself in difficulties?

What is the Minister saying to Conservative-controlled Castle Point council, which has been capped? Is he saying that it has been capped because it is inefficient? If he is not saying that, does he accept that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State misled the House when he made his statement last November?

What would the Minister say to Bill Dixon-Smith, the Conservative leader of the Association of County Councils, who said on the BBC television programme, "On the Record", on a Sunday a few weeks ago:

"Because of the capping regime, local government no longer has any room to manoeuvre. In effect, even the level of the Council Tax is also set by the centre. As I believe in independent local government, that is wrong. So in an absolute sense it must and always will be wrong and personally I will always fight against it.

The man who pays the piper calls the tune. The Government is paying up all the money, they say 'we have an absolute right to say what should happen'.

Now I find that obnoxious. The purpose of local government is to judge what is necessary locally and do it. But at the moment we don't have the independence I think we ought to have."

Does the Minister agree that, because of the capping regime, local government no longer has any room to manoeuvre, as Mr. Dixon-Smith, the Conservative leader of the Association of County Councils, says? Does he agree that local councillors are better placed to judge what is necessary locally? Does he understand why Mr. Dixon-Smith finds it obnoxious that central Government believe that they have the absolute right to say what should happen?

The Prime Minister said at the Tory local government conference that an end must be put to wrangling between central and local government and that local government should be left to get on with the job. The Minister has made similar comments in recent weeks. Does he recognise that those who face cuts in services in communities throughout the country and those who are either threatened with the loss of, or who have already lost, their jobs in councils throughout the country—perhaps people in Barnet and Enfield—are aware, as Mr. Dixon-Smith seems to be aware, that there is a huge gap between the Government's rhetoric, the Prime Minister's rhetoric, the Secretary of State for the Environment's rhetoric and the Minister's own rhetoric and what is actually happening in councils throughout the country? Does the Minister agree that if that gap is to be narrowed, and that if conciliation is to be genuine, a major review of local government financial structures is necessary?

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. Gentleman had an increase of 3·7 per cent. in the current year, would he be plausible if he went round saying that he had had a cut? Local government has had a 3·7 per cent. increase in respect of business rates and grants from the centre.

Mr. Henderson: The Minister and I have had this argument before.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): The hon. Gentleman has lost the argument.

Mr. Henderson: No; the Minister has lost the argument. It has been shown clearly that the figure of 3·7 per cent. is an accountancy figure, a notional figure. The real increase in cash resources between what local government spent last year, based on capping regulations imposed by a Conservative Government, and what local government needs to spend this year to stay within the law is very much lower than 3·7 per cent. Independent sources have estimated it to be a 1 per cent. increase in cash resources at a time when inflation is about 3 per cent. That is clearly a reduction in real resources.

Does the Minister agree that a fundamental review of the standard spending assessment system is urgently needed if any sense of equity among the competing claims for resources is to be restored, so that we do not end up in the ridiculous position whereby Huntingdon—the Prime Minister's area—is considered to be more socially deprived than Chester-le-Street? Anybody who took a walk from the railway station to the local hotel in those two places would immediately observe that that is not the case.

Does the Minister also agree that capping regulations should be changed now in order to give more democracy to local authorities and that there would then be a need to remove those capping regulations completely in the next financial round of financial settlements in the autumn statement?

I am not here this morning just to outline where I think that the Government have got things wrong in recent months and during the past 14 years. Conservative Members will be pleased to hear that I am also here to outline Labour's position on a number of these issues. I shall return to the point that was raised earlier by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls).

The Opposition believe that if local democracy means anything—as the Minister is beginning to suggest he is adopting as a policy and as his friend, Mr. Bill Dixon-Smith, clearly believes is essential—capping should be ended and the system of distributing Government grant should be subject to a major review and overhaul. We say that because we believe in local democracy. Individual liberty requires the guarantee of democracy. Our nation's democracy is offended if there is no balance of power between central and local power structures. That balance requires more vigorous, independent and better-resourced local government.

Some Conservative Members, as evidenced this morning by a flurry of observations relating to the 1980s and Conservative philosophy during that period, have argued that community provision holds back individual liberty. Individual liberty and opportunity for the vast majority of people are enhanced by community provision of education and training, by community regulation of our environment, our space and our transport systems, by community provision of law and order forces and social action to tackle crime, by individual advice services to our citizens and by the provision of care services to our most underprivileged and vulnerable people. Our citizens, however, will not be empowered to have more control over their own lives unless their liberty is protected. Their liberty can be guaranteed only by community provision, which can be guaranteed only by local democracy.

Our citizens are entitled to the efficient use of public resources. Value for money must be assured by sound auditing procedures. Where inefficiencies are identified in services provided either directly or indirectly by subcontractors, they must be put right. Councils must decide—here I come to the point raised by the hon. Member for Teignbridge—as they have decided for more than 100 years, how best they can meet their responsibilities. If they judge that direct provision is most effective, they must be allowed to make that choice. If, on the other hand, they judge that the subcontracting of services is better, tendering should be on the basis that the council determines the quality of the service and that legal obligations are met in relation to the terms and conditions of the staff.

Mr. Nicholls: I do not believe that the difference between us on this point is as great as it might seem, but it is in one crucial respect. How on earth can it be decided that a council has made the right decision in contracting out its services unless it is required to go through the process of competitive tendering?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. What is crucial is not just that services that have been contracted out are measured in relation to efficiency but that services that have been provided directly are also measured in relation to efficiency, and that the overall efficiency of the council is not broken down by having too great a division between those services which are contracted out and those services which are not. A recent London Business School survey, reported in the *Municipal Journal*, reinforces that point.

The Labour party is not against councils tendering in the private sector for the provision of services. Councils have always tendered in the private sector. The important point is that councils should make the right judgment on how best they can provide services by means of a

[Mr. Henderson]

combination of direct provision—some services cannot be contracted out and have to be provided directly—and indirect, subcontracted provision.

If one believes in local democracy, which I thought the Government suggested earlier in the debate they had been converted to, one has to resolve the conflict between central Government telling local government how it should provide its services and local government having the democratic right to decide on the best way to provide those services.

The important point for central Government to understand, contrary to the impression that has been given during the past 10 years, is that central auditing procedures should be tightened up, as should the reporting procedures, so that everyone in the community, both those involved at local government and central Government level, are fully informed about what is actually happening in local authorities. Then decisions can be made about whether the Government need to change the regulations that govern the way in which the provision is made. That decision cannot be made until they know how efficiently services are being run at local level. That is what the quality commission, for which the Labour party argued at the last election, would have been responsible for finding out. I concede to those who exaggerate the productivity impact of compulsory competitive tendering that it can improve efficiency, but it has not always done so. In some instances, compulsory competitive tendering has reduced the quality of service and, in many instances, it has reduced the wages and conditions of the staff who have to provide those services. In some cases, it has been adopted as a cover to break up the integrity of community provision; it starts by cutting the corners and finishes by cutting the services.

The only guarantee of effective delivery of service is good management. That is true of services that are directly provided and of subcontracted services. In the spirit of their recent mutterings, I challenge the Government to strive to obtain the most effective way of delivering local services and to stand up for the principle of local people deciding local services. If the Government agree to no more than what many Conservative councillors are demanding, they will revoke the current rules on the standard spending assessment, end capping and seek to restore democratic local government. That is what the Labour party demands, and it is reasonable to do so. I believe that the majority of the British people support that demand and that the majority of those who live in county council areas will support it on 6 May.

10.30 am

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I begin by declaring my interest as a parliamentary adviser to the Federation of Associations of Specialists and Sub-contractors and the National Sub-contractors Council. I also hold a partnership in a firm of solicitors called Dunn and Baker.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) forgot to mention Mr. Beecham. He was so generous in giving way that I did not want to remind him yet again. In case that troubles him, I shall refer to Mr. Beecham again, and if by then he has understood what he said and wants to intervene again, I shall happily let him do so. By then he will have had a long time to work out the answer to the point.

Like many hon. Members, I have experience of local government. I served on a district council and now work as closely as possible with my own district council in Teignbridge. Teignbridge district council, like the council on which I served, is not perfect, but it is extremely good. Like any council, its performance must be judged against the service that it provides to local people.

Ultimately, the only test that can be applied is, how good is the service and how much does it cost? There is nothing wrong or contradictory in saying that a council is judged by its services and how much they cost because, directly or indirectly, local people pay for the service.

Even under the arrangements for the council tax, 14 per cent. of the money that is spent by local government is raised locally. That represents an inevitable but substantial burden on local council tax payers, and obviously the burden of inefficient services will fall on local people. Therefore, the ultimate test of councils must be whether they provide that service and at an appropriate price.

That may sound relatively uncontroversial, but it can go slightly deeper. Labour Members sometimes express their belief—perhaps more than we have heard today—that councils have a further role as job providers and that their worth can be assessed by how many jobs they provide.

That point was put honestly, if somewhat starkly, in a radio programme about three weeks ago. A COHSE trade union official was being interviewed about the national health service and he said that it was the responsibility of the national health service to provide work for the people who work within it. I waited for the qualification that I thought would follow about service to the consumer, but it did not come. I do not criticise him for that—he obviously felt strongly that the NHS has a role as a job provider—but I disagree with that assessment. A council is not entitled to justify its performance by saying, "We do a range of tasks for which we may not be well fitted, but we provide jobs."

Where do we go from there? It must be in the interests of local people that, where possible, services are put out to competitive tendering. It is such a common-sense proposition that one wonders why one must argue about it at all. In an earlier intervention I mentioned Jeremy Beecham, the Labour chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, who said, straightforwardly:

"compulsory competitive tendering has brought some cost-effectiveness and genuine saving which might not otherwise have been achieved."

That tribute to the effectiveness of a process that the Labour party has opposed throughout and apparently opposes today is all the more impressive for having been said through clenched teeth.

But it is not just Mr. Beecham. The chief executive of a Labour authority, Kieron Walsh, writing on competitive tendering for local authority services seems to have gone beyond the clenched-teeth stage to positive enthusiasm. He said:

"There is an awful lot that comes from it"—

compulsive competitive tendering.

"There is much greater knowledge of particular service areas. It exposes an awful lot of inefficiencies formerly taken for granted. We are a more efficient, slimmer organisation. It has had real and definite benefits and not just in defined services."

There is nothing particularly surprising in those comments. It is no more than the practical conclusion that one would draw from a common-sense proposition.

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman chose to quote a chief executive who is probably earning more than £60,000 a year. Has he any quotes from workers at the bottom end of services, whose wages are being cut and many of whose jobs are disappearing altogether as a result of what he repeatedly calls compulsive competitive tendering?

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Gentleman is troubled about the salary of the chief executive of a Labour authority, his questions might be better addressed to that authority. I should have thought, but I will stand corrected if the hon. Gentleman thinks that I am wrong, that it has probably said that it has to pay that sum to get somebody of suitable quality for such a responsible job. If the hon. Gentleman had said, "No, we give those salaries to our cronies," that would have been a different point that I had not anticipated.

It is perfectly obvious that it is in the interests of those who live in a local community that services should be provided cost-effectively. I hoped to hear today, but we have not heard it, the Labour party's attitude to that. My hon. Friend the Minister said that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) does not seem to understand quite where he stands on this. In his interview with *Tribune*, he seemed to be saying that there is something to be said for it, but later he is quoted as saying there is not so much to be said for it.

In the *Tribune* article, the hon. Gentleman says that he sees the case for CCT for the provision of basic services such as refuse collection, and at the launch of Labour county council election campaign in response to the question,

"Are you still opposed to CCT?"

he said:

"Yes we are, because it does not lead to great increases and improvements in efficiency."

That is the position of the mugwump through the ages. Labour Members will recall that Lord Shinwell defined that as someone who keeps his mug on one side of the fence and his wump on the other.

One cannot have it both ways. The problem is that Labour has not said how it feels about CCT. It is quite straightforward. Going out to tender produces the information that a council needs to know whether it is providing its services efficiently. It is worth spending a moment or two considering what happens when councils are asked to go through that process, which even Labour politicians and Labour appointees believe serves their community well.

I shall give only two brief examples, one from Bristol. As it was obliged to do, Bristol council recently put its services out to tender. It put out a single huge tender for its refuse collection services, street cleaning, public convenience and building cleaning. Not surprisingly, no one private firm was able to come up with a contract which would have been worth more than £6 million.

Rather more interesting is what happened in the Nottingham area in 1990. The Labour-controlled council put out to tender its road-sweeping and refuse collection services, and awarded the contracts to its own workers despite two lower bids. To celebrate the triumph of compulsory competitive tendering, it was announced that a party would be held to mark the awarding of the contract. That party cost about £2,000, but I do not know whether the catering went to outside caterers. However, the example shows that, even if at times lip service is paid to observing the law in the first instance, it is often not observed throughout the process. I hope that the Minister will be able to say what is being done to prevent such flouting of the law.

Although the case is well made for proper compulsory competitive tendering, there are two aspects on which one must ask whether the application of the general rule works as it should. The first aspect is that of specialisms, of which two are especially important—the provision of legal services and education services. I am sure that there are others of which other hon. Members will have experience.

Teignbridge district council has told me that the legal services provided by a local authority are often specialised. Local authority law is not the mainstream law with which solicitors in private practice are usually involved. Clearly, in a major city such as Exeter, there are a number of extremely good firms of solicitors which provide a full range of services. As such firms operate in large cities, they have the expertise to provide competent services across a range of subjects.

There are many excellent firms, but it has been pointed out to me that, in smaller areas, it may not be possible for smaller firms of solicitors to compete and offer the same level of expertise as exists in-house in local authorities, because those firms cannot offer the same specialism.

Hon. Members know that law is an increasingly specialised business. The fact that one holds a legal qualification does not mean in practice that one can deal with a particular class of work as competently as it should be dealt with. That may sound odd coming from a solicitor in private practice, but it is a fair point which has been well made to me by my own district council. I hope that the Minister will refer to specialised services.

The second specialism that concerns me was mentioned by my county council. Although there are transitional arrangements to enable the county council to offer the services of its own educational psychologists to grant-maintained schools in its local authority area, they are time-limited and, in due course, the council will not be able to offer those services. To some extent, it is the mirror image of CCT, but it reinforces the main point that certain in-house specialisations and skills in local authorities may not be available outside. That problem should be taken into account.

Another point that has been mentioned briefly and has caused some misunderstanding is the provision of part III residential retirement homes in the private or local authority sector. From the comments that one hears—usually from the Opposition—one would think that there was only one way to provide part III residential accommodation for retired people, and that is through a particular outfit. The classic way of providing a retirement home structure is through the local authority. Clearly, those who work in the local authority believe that to be so because, understandably, they are thinking of their jobs.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the best test would be to ask elderly people and allow them to choose whether to go into the private or public sector? Should there not be a level playing field so that the same rules for the financing the care of the elderly in residential homes apply to both sectors? Does he agree

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

with the Select Committee on Health's conclusion that the present rules need changing because they discriminate in favour of the private sector and against the public sector, which is what some elderly people chose?

Mr. Nicholls: I would agree, if it were not for my own experience. Often, when it is proposed that there should be greater provision of private retirement accommodation at the expense of local authority accommodation, the public sector unions tells people that they are being privatised, will have to go into inferior accommodation and will end up as the product of someone's profit motive.

Mr. Bayley *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but I am speaking from my experience of my county. He will speak from experience of his county, but I know how the public sector unions opposed plans in Devon to replace the substandard accommodation that it was providing with better private sector accommodation.

I understand that people working in the public sector in county council homes regard the greater involvement of the private sector as a threat to their jobs, but that should not ultimately guide us. We should be guided not only by the job prospects of those who work in the homes but by the standard of accommodation being offered to retired people. That is the ultimate test. The idea that suitable accommodation can be provided only by a local authority is entirely wrong.

I have probably spent more time in retirement homes than many people of my age, because my mother was the matron of a county council part III residential home. One of the things that I picked up over the years, having lived in homes in the private and public sectors, is that elderly people need the comfort and security of a service well delivered.

To tell people living in retirement accommodation that services would be better delivered in another way will not automatically appeal to them greatly in the twilight of their days. It is important that we can tell them that they are not being farmed out to provide profits for wicked entrepreneurs but that they are being provided with a service better than that which they would receive in the local authority sector. That is the ultimate criterion.

Mr. Bayley: Is not it wrong for the council, the Government or anyone other than the elderly person and his family to decide whether one provision is better than another? Does the hon. Gentleman agree with my earlier point, that it should be for the elderly person himself or herself, with the support of the family, to choose where to go, and that there should be a diverse range of provision from which to choose? After all, we are talking about elderly people's homes; the hon. Gentleman knows that from his experience of the residential care sector. Should it not be for elderly people to choose where they are to live in the last few years of their lives?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman is clearly most well meaning, but he is also an innocent abroad. Does he think that that is the way in which the matter was put to people when Devon county council was phasing out some substandard accommodation? The hon. Gentleman comes from a gentler part of the world than I do. What I saw going on in my county was public sector unions ruthlessly exploiting the fears of people who were about to be given a choice, by terrifying the life out of them and telling them that they would be in all sorts of trouble if they found themselves——

Mr. Bayley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman again in a moment, because he makes my case even more effectively than I do, which frankly is saying something.

What I found especially interesting during the general election campaign was meeting a number of people who had moved into private retirement homes from the county council sector and said that they had had no idea how good it would be and that they only wished that they had had the opportunity earlier.

We have managed to give people that opportunity. Those who back the public sector unions, following their own particular interest, know the business that they are in. The problem for the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), for many of his hon. Friends and for all Labour Front-Bench Members is that, if one is sponsored by the whole range of public sector unions, one cannot act objectively on the matter.

Mr. Bayley: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his generosity in giving way three times. I wish that he would not cloak his argument in spurious attacks on trade unions, and I wish that he would stick to the point—the welfare of elderly people.

Before I came to the House, I was a health economist. I carried out a survey in a Conservative-controlled county council of care for the elderly in private sector residential homes and nursing homes, in national health service long-stay beds and in the county's part III publicly owned residential homes. I interviewed more than 1,000 elderly people about their preferences.

Fewer than one in 20 in the public sector homes said that they would have chosen, when they moved into a home, to move in a private sector home. Fewer than one in 309 in private sector homes said that they would have considered moving into a public sector home. The choices of those individuals should be respected, whichever home they have chosen.

Will the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) therefore answer my question, not with vague references to and smears about trade unions, but by referring to consumer choice? Does he believe in consumer choice? Does he believe that elderly people, like any other people, should choose where they live?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman's aspirations would lead him to cross the Floor of the House, even if his logic did not. In Devon, people were not being offered a choice by the public sector unions. They were told, "If you leave the secure accommodation provided by this county council, you will be exploited in the outside world." The hon. Gentleman says that I was attacking trade unions. I was careful to say that I understood why those who are in public sector trade unions and who work in part III residential homes within the county council structure are concerned. I did not attack them for one moment.

Let me make it clear to the hon. Member for York that the people I have been attacking are the local politicians —politicians ultimately like himself—who are irredeemably compromised. On the one hand, they are sponsored largely by public sector trade unions. On the other hand,

they know that a choice can be provided for elderly people who could benefit from it, to the possible detriment of the job interests of those who put them here. That was my attack. I promise the hon. Gentleman that I reserve my attack entirely for the politicians, and not for those who operate within the public sector.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is there free choice when only the Government have free speech?

Mr. Nicholls: No. In this sector and in many others, there will be an element of choice only if the House ensures that there is an element of choice. If it were left to local authorities, and especially if it were left to Labour authorities, there would be no choice. The whole history of compulsory competitive tendering shows that it benefits the community and that it has been opposed to the hilt by the Labour party.

All this debate has to be judged against one criterion only: do the processes of CCT and the other processes about which we have talked produce a benefit to the consumer? If they do, that justifies them. The fact that, in the process, vested interests may find that their noses are put out of joint is neither here nor there. Ultimately, it is local people and the service that is delivered to them which should be the final judgment on the processes that we have discussed.

10.54 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the debate greatly because the subject is timely and also generally important. I welcomed the summary of the Government's position—if it is now to be reflected in their policy—when the Minister said those three simple but often repeated words, "Local government matters". It matters greatly. It matters that more and more people of high quality are involved as councillors and as officers in local government. Many good people are already involved in local government, as councillors and as officers. However—I know that the Minister shares this view—there are some who are not involved because the present structure is not conducive to such involvement. One target that we have to seek to achieve in debating and regularly deciding the question how we develop local government is to maximise the best use of the best people so that the best services are delivered to the widest number.

The Minister made one other statement with which I partly agree. In large measure, the job of local authorities should be to enable rather than to provide. That does not, of course, mean that often they should not provide. That is where the Government begin to get into some difficulty. One of the Minister's phrases, which *Hansard* will record accurately, suggested that local government services should be principally for those in need. That depends on definition. I would not support the Minister if he said that the free provision of public libraries should be for those in need and then defined those in need as those who could not afford to buy books. There is a range of services which should be freely available at the point of delivery and to which people should contribute according to their ability to pay through local and central taxation but which should be freely available for everyone. Many of the services that local government provides are such services. To take up an exchange earlier in the debate, people may choose to opt into local authority accommodation for the elderly and such accommodation should be available for people to choose.

In his peroration, the Minister said that the wind was now set fair for prosperity. Ministers always live with hope triumphing over reality. He may be right.

Mr. Redwood: I am.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister is never modest. Whether he is right is not yet entirely clear. Let us hope that he is right. The more prosperous the nation, the more we can ensure that local government provides higher quality services because there will be more money to spend.

This debate raises not only the question of what the balance between public and private provision should be, and how much the private sector should be a partner, but other fundamental issues. For my lifetime and for decades before that, there have been battles over local government. As our constitution gives no guaranteed place to local government, and as we have a sovereign Parliament which can do anything, unrestrained by a constitution or a supreme court, local government could be abolished by this place tomorrow. For local government, that is a fundamental weakness because it allows Parliament to interfere regularly with local government, and not always to the advantage of the provision of local services.

The history of the Tory party and local government over the past 30 years has not been glorious. The Tories created the metropolitan county councils and the Greater London council in the 1960s. They reviewed the shire structure and created new counties in the 1970s. They abolished the metropolitan counties, the GLC and the Inner London education authority in the 1980s. Now central Government have realised that they did not get it right when they reviewed the counties in the 1970s and propose to abolish some or all of them and other councils as well. That whole process has hardly been conducive to the stability of local government. My fundamental theme today, which has already been hinted at, is that Government have often acted without the consent and co-operation of the people in local government and of the people on whose behalf services are delivered.

There has been regular central Government interference in the financial regime under which local government works. The revenue support grant and the standard spending assessment have both been decided by the Government and not as a result of a collaborative decision or, better still, a decision by local authorities. Local government should itself be asked to agree the formula for the allocation of money. We had the rates and the poll tax and we have just started with the council tax—a series of different local financial regimes that have not generally taken into account the views of the people delivering the service; indeed, the poll tax did not take those views into account at all. These people have argued strongly about the foolishness of the Government's proposals. Now, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) said, all this has also been circumscribed by capping so that no local authority has the freedom to decide how much it wants to raise and spend without certain decisions having severe adverse implications.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): The hon. Gentleman expressed concern about the method of grant distribution and said that local authorities should be able to determine

[Mr. Robin Squire]

the basis of that distribution. He should anchor his argument a little closer to the ground. As he knows, the Government are undertaking a full review of the SSA this year in the light of the new census output, and we already circulate provisional SSAs each year. The hon. Gentleman must accept, however, that there will never be a way of distributing money that will be 100 per cent. popular with local authorities, for the understandable reason that every change that is made brings benefits to some and disbenefits to others. That will ever be the case.

Mr. Hughes: Of course I understand that, and I accept that it will ultimately be the responsibility of central Government to decide the total sum, inasmuch as this concerns money that central Government hands back to local government—leaving aside the money that local government can raise. My hon. Friends and I have long argued, however, that it should be left to local government —unless it fails to do so—to work out the formula. What local authorities actually get will depend on the total, but the formula should be left to them to determine. I believe that if we had a system similar to the election of the Pope and locked local government away and waited for the white smoke, it would eventually reach agreement on its own formula and prefer that to one imposed by central Government of whatever party. That formula would be better for some local authorities than others, but, in any event, everyone would be forced to reach agreement.

A further question that is central to the debate is how we can ensure quality and value for money in the delivery of local government services. That involves questions of audit and accountability. Although we have an audit process, the public do not see the results clearly; they are not given regular independent information, statistics and audit review results in respect of their local government services. Those involved in the auditing process ought to be able to report back to the public, local authority by local authority on a regular basis.

As yet, there is not adequate accountability either, although the extent of accountability varies in different parts of the country. Of course there are elections, but the more that local government services have been put out to quangos, which are not accountable, the less accountability there has been. As the Minister realises, I know about that specifically because for a decade many of the decisions in my borough—and, indeed, in my constituency—have been in the hands of the London Docklands development corporation, a body appointed entirely by the Secretary of State for the Environment. In every case, the majority of those serving on the LDDC have come from outside local government. That is not an accountable service. The LDDC's planning committee is in no way accountable to my constituents or to me. That is not good local government and does not produce democratic results.

I believe that the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities is considering proposals that will in part improve accountability in London, and I hope that something will happen sooner rather than later in that regard. I understand that serious consideration is being given to the proposal that elections to borough councils should be annual as opposed to four-yearly. That would bring London into line with the rest of the country and would improve accountability. I hope that the legislation to allow that to happen is introduced soon.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North will know that we share his view that capping should be ended and that there would be a revision of local government funding. That is fundamental. We also share his view—and this is perhaps his most important point philosophically—that individual liberty is enhanced by good community provision rather than demeaned by it. That is important. I mean no criticism of the hon. Gentleman when I say that it is important that those in the Labour leadership, who understand these things, should ensure that their local authority colleagues also understand them. I speak from bitter experience when I say that they seem still not to be the views of many Labour councillors or in many local Labour parties.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) was right in stating that the job of local government is not to provide jobs for people in local government. It may be to provide jobs in the community to assist regeneration, but the defence of self-interest in the form of local government jobs is not its purpose at all. I would qualify my remarks, however. Suppose that—as has happened in my borough —there is a threat to remove wardens from sheltered housing units and the elderly people respond by saying, "We want the wardens." The retention of certain jobs is fundamental to the provision of the service. Certain jobs —the jobs of home helps, care assistants, social workers, teachers and residential wardens—are fundamental to an integrated local community service. People sometimes prefer to deal with staff employed by the local authority than with a contractor who sends different agency staff from one day to the next. That makes for a far less good quality service.

Local government has had many problems over the past 14 years, but its main problem has been that the Tories have put dogma first rather than need. The Government's privatisation policies for local government have brought some benefits, but they have also often brought hurt, no cost saving and no satisfactory result. It is not necessarily the case that jobs can be done better by the private sector; there is no evidence for that. It is not necessarily true either that the cheaper the tender price is the better the job will be. It is quality, not cheapness, which should be the determining factor. It is in their subservience to the principle of privatisation come what may and compulsory competitive tendering that the Tories have gone wrong. Of course competitive tendering should be allowed, but local government should make that choice rather than having competitive tendering forced on them.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have embarrassed both of us before by saying how much I agree with him and I shall do so on this occasion, too. Surely the hon. Gentleman is saying that competitive tendering can produce benefits. It would surely be common ground between us that, if it were not compulsory, there is no way in which a number of Labour-controlled authorities would ever do it, for the reasons to which he alluded. If, in particular cases, the process of compulsory competitive tendering has not delivered a service, it has failed in accordance with its own terms of reference. There is no question of Conservative Members justifying that, as we would be as concerned about it as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Mr. Hughes: I understand that important argument. It is a fundamental principle of democracy that people should be allowed to make mistakes. I believe that the people made the mistake of electing the wrong Government in the past four general elections. I am consoled only by the fact that a minority of people voted for the Government, so it was a minority mistake and not a majority mistake. The system delivered the wrong result. We must allow the same principle in local government.

If we have a very good auditing system and the report of the auditing process reaches the people, if a local council —for example, my Labour-controlled Southwark council —does not have a competitive tendering process in leisure provision or the management of parks and it therefore provides bad value for money, the audit process should expose it and that would influence the electorate at an election. I understand the arguments, but there should be a reaction by the local people instead of an imposition by central Government who know much less about the needs of Southwark or Teignbridge than the people who live there.

Mr. Robin Squire: Does not the history of the past 10 years or so demonstrate that what the hon. Gentleman has described does not deliver the goods? Indeed, no less than one of the then Labour spokesmen pointed out that without CCT Liverpool would not have cleaned its streets.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister understands the point that of course we sometimes end up with a bad service if we leave it to people who are not good at running the service. However, the ballot box exists to enable people to kick out the bad service providers.

For example, Labour-run Lambeth has had a history of the worst excesses of Labour local government. There were recently two by-elections in Lambeth—one in a solid Labour ward and one in the ward just over Westminster bridge—and my colleagues won both of them from Labour because those voters said that they would no longer put up with Labour in Lambeth. I hope that that continues next year and that Labour in Lambeth is swept from office because Labour deserves to go. However, we must leave that to the electorate. If the electorate decide that they cannot be bothered to change things, we must live with that. Indeed, the Minister, at his level, has been the beneficiary of that for the past few years.

To finalise the point, the Audit Commission and many other experts in local government have made it clear that the private sector does not necessarily deliver a better result. The Audit Commission has made that point regularly when considering urban policy and other matters.

I believe that the partnership between the good in the private sector and the good in the public sector must, however, include the vital third element: a partnership with the people who must make the choices. If the people do not comprise the third partner, and if we believe we can take the decisions for them, we are not doing what is best for local government.

Local government should not be a battlefield between public and private dogmas. My colleagues and I, and our predecessor parties, believe in a partnership approach which brings together the public sector, private business, community and voluntary groups and, most importantly, the local people in each local council area.

Liberal Democrats believe that local government should be accountable through local, democratically elected representatives. We do not believe that better service can be achieved if local government is increasingly fragmented through more quangos created by central Government which sidestep the process of local accountability. Ours is the kind of partnership, coupled with accountability, which delivers the best results. We believe that it gives the plurality of service provision that a country, with all its diversity, requires. It also allows the different communities and community mixes to be reflected in their local government services.

I accept that the Minister has become much more measured since his earlier and obviously more headstrong days in the 1970s. Perhaps that is the result of the sobering experience of first being a parliamentary candidate in the constituency of Peckham. That was not a particularly successful part of the Minister's political career before he went to the leafy shire seat of Wokingham—at least, in comparison to Peckham, Wokingham is a leafy shire.

I hope that one of the things to come from the Government's review is that we shall establish the core duties of local government so that we can agree the purpose of local government. Many people in local government do not know what local government is for. The police do not know, as they are about to have local accountability taken from them—apart from in London where at last, after a very long time, we are to have a little local accountability. Teachers do not know, because in many cases schools are becoming grant maintained and moving outside the local authority system, as further education has also just done.

There must be some security about the obligation and duty of local government. Of course, that can be the subject of local debate, but we must be clear that, unless everything that is provided locally is provided adequately, we are not providing the service that local people want.

There is another fundamental flaw in the present system. We regularly legislate for local government to provide services. The latest large-scale example of that relates to community care which is in force from this month. The Minister wanted to know why people always ask for more money from local government. They do that because when we tell local councils, through legislation, to do something, no one guarantees that they have the resources to perform that task. It is a fundamental failing in our system that we can pass any law that we like without guaranteeing the money to carry out what we require people to do.

Until we sort that out, local government will always fail to deliver, in a way that is different from central government, because central Government ultimately have the power to collect the money to do whatever they want. That is why 92 per cent. of the directors of social services have just said that the Government are not funding community care adequately. That is why the standard spending assessment structure, which is based, as I understand it still is, on the level of spending in 1985, has been so criticised. The Minister looks doubtful as I say that, but I understand that the fundamental structure is based on that pattern. Obviously, we know that it has been tinkered with. Indeed, it is tinkered with every year, as we all know to our cost. However, we must try to establish that financial relationship on a more secure basis.

In the world of local and central government, particularly in the run-up to elections such as this year's

[Mr. Hughes]

county elections, there are always discussions of where there will and where there will not be pacts. I observe that there are discussions in Berkshire, no doubt in the context of the Newbury by-election. I believe that there should be many more pacts. However, the pacts that I am talking about today are clearer and more secure pacts with the people for whom social services should be provided.

We must ensure that we enable the local government that local people have chosen. We must ensure that we do not impose on people local government structures that we believe are best for them. Whitehall and Westminster do not know best.

Tomorrow I will attend the launch of the vote to establish the largest tenants' management co-operative to be set up from local authority property in Britain, on the Tabard Garden estate in my constituency. There are 35 blocks of council properties on the estate and a community of 1,500 or more people. They will decide to take on their own management. They have opted to do their own thing. That is a choice exercised by them under legislation.

Our job should be to legislate to allow local government to make choices and to allow people to make choices from the services provided by local government. That is the way to secure that we get the best quality of service and the best people to provide it at the best possible cost. I hope that in the future we have less dogma and are more responsive to what people say that they want.

11.18 am

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): I am pleased to be called to participate in the debate, because for some years I was a councillor on Kirklees metropolitan council. That council was spawned by the Local Government Act 1974. Probably no one knows where Kirklees is, but everyone knows the location of Huddersfield and Dewsbury. Those two towns were fused, like reluctant Siamese twins, by that same Act which sought to destroy the Ridings in my county. I hope that that situation will soon be rectified.

When I left school in 1974, I joined our family company, which was established in 1845. One way or another over the past 150 years, our company has seen many changes in local government. In the context of the debate, it is interesting to examine the meaning of the phrase "private enterprise". At its simplest, private enterprise is the best system yet devised by mankind for the supply of goods and services.

When my grandfather used to rock me on his knee, he told me about the Labour party and its plans for nationalisation. What an old-fashioned word that seems today for an old-fashioned creed. He told me how Labour regarded business and business men. If he were alive today, would he recognise the present Labour party? He would not, but only because, in his day, that party was made up of genuine working-class socialists, whereas the present rulers of that ailing party tend to be middle-class adherents to sociology rather than socialism. Its councillors want to impose their modish views on race, sex, education and feminism on our local and national life.

Labour is a party of left-wing teachers and lecturers, but even they cannot ignore the fact that, in 1993, from Moscow to Manchester, all around the world, the market is the best possible method of supplying goods and services. The opposite method, the public sector, has been proved beyond all doubt to be the worst possible method of supplying goods and services. Today of all days bears witness to the truth of that. Of all the 47 British companies that the Government have put back in the private sector, which one has downed tools today? There is a deathly silence in the House. The answer is that none of them has downed tools, because they are all getting on with the job.

Those companies are not interested in political strikes led by maniacs from the 1970s, who dream of the days when they brought this nation to its knees. The only companies in which strike action is taken nowadays are in the mollycoddled public sector where people are led by union bosses who think that everyone owes them a living, a guaranteed job for life. We see that today in the actions of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, and the National Union of Teachers, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the National Union of Public Employees and the National and Local Government Officers Association are adopting the same appalling attitude.

That brings me neatly to the subject of local government, which remains largely the preserve of the public sector. The rigours of the market have been brought to bear in many areas of our previously semi-nationalised public life, with resulting benefits, and it is clearly in the interests of the public to extend such benefits to local government. They need to be extended by the bucketful, especially in the metropolitan areas.

I admit that dozens of councils have already seen the light, but there are many more Labour councils in which there is an inconceivable hostility to business and enterprise. In those councils, the threads of mistrust, rivalry and envy among councillors and officers alike frequently curdle into malice. In such places, the prevailing attitude is that if the council cannot get its nose in the trough, it is not worth going to the trough. While the rest of us in the real world have to get on with making a living by competing in the real world, the vast, gridlocked structure of municipal socialism has clamped itself securely to almost every aspect of local life.

Talk of partnership with private enterprise sounds hollow in the corridors of such town halls, but most services for the public can be better handled by the private sector. Business men seeking partnership in such areas are wasting their breath. In the meantime, people living in the areas have to deal with the council across a bewildering range of everyday activities that would be better done by the private sector. It is frustrating to hack one's way through the permafrost of local government processes whose icy grip has atrophied town centres all over the land. There is nothing dynamic or vital about Labour councils and officialdom. They toil between two masters—politics and financial constraints.

Some people say that the Government should give more money to Labour councillors, but those councillors have a voracious appetite for spending other people's money and the worst record for spending it unwisely. It is taxpayers' money, not the Government's. Business has different priorities and invigorating qualities.

Mr. Bayley: The hon. Gentleman represents a constituency in the same county as mine. Why is the borough of Scarborough charging a higher average council tax than Labour-controlled York, and why did it

charge a higher poll tax than Labour-controlled York? Under the old rating system, why did it charge a higher average rate per household than York?

Mr. Sykes: I shall answer that with great pleasure, because the hon. Gentleman makes my case. Perhaps he is not aware that Scarborough borough council is Labour controlled. That is why the rates are so high.

Mr. Bayley: I do not think that it was Labour controlled when rates existed. It was Conservative controlled at that time, as it was during the period of the poll tax.

Mr. Sykes: The hon. Gentleman should know that the rating system was completely unfair. That is why a Conservative Government had the guts to destroy it and substitute a fairer system.

As I have said, business has different priorities and invigorating qualities that our towns desperately need. The last thing that business needs is a committee, a sub-committee or even an executive sub-committee, because usually anything that a Labour committee touches turns to stone. That is why there are now so many badly run towns, whereas at the turn of the century our local government was an example to the world.

In those days, there was a true partnership between the public and private sectors. The great men who built our great town halls, which by and large are now occupied by left-wing pigmies, built and ran them as a matter of pride and service. It was not because no one in the private sector would employ the people who worked in them, as is sometimes the case today. If a true partnership is to arise, it is vital to get local government back to basics.

Some people could be forgiven for wondering how on earth we ever managed before the Local Government Act 1974. Just as in the private sector, local government needs a bank manager breathing down its neck all the time and, as in the private sector, it needs true competition. Why is it that one can return almost anything to a Marks and Spencer shop if one is not satisfied with the goods, whereas, if one has more than a bin full of rubbish, one has great difficulty in trying to get council bin men to take it away?

Local government needs to realise that the customer is king, which is what the private sector has realised. Like it, before voting for expenditure, councillors must ask themselves, "If I had to dig my hand into my own pocket for this money, would I vote for this measure?" Councillors should be forced to meet in their own time. If that happened, the public would see how dedicated some of their Labour councillors were. Because of the partnership working properly between local government and the private sector, there would be less for councillors to talk about.

I have little hope that many Labour councils will ever come to terms with the importance of consumer-led services. They are interested only in producer-led services. They have closed minds and are interested only in closed shops. It is all done in the name of local people, but never in their interests.

The plain, unvarnished truth is that the vast bureaucratic structure of socialist local government has become one gigantic gravy train. It is saturated at almost every level by Labour party activists, and its top Labour councillors, many of whom one would not pay in washers, are clambering over one another for chairmanships, or chairs as we are supposed to call them these days, or for any committee place as long as it has an attendance allowance plus expenses.

County council elections are looming. Conservatives believe in partnership with the private sector and that consumer-led services are the most important of all. We believe that the consumer, the customer, is king, and that taxpayers' money is precious. The public also believe in those things. They share our vision, and that is why they will vote Conservative on 6 May.

11.29 am

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I have no objection to partnerships between the private sector and the public sector. Indeed, such partnerships have been a feature of local government for decades, if not centuries. Many of the most imaginative and innovative partnership schemes have been brought in by Labour authorities.

For example, in economic development, metropolitan counties such as West Yorkshire pioneered job creation partnerships between local government and the private sector and brought jobs into their regions. The Greater London enterprise board was established by a Labour-led Greater London council. However, the metropolitan counties and the GLC were abolished by the Conservative Government, partly because the Government did not like those public sector/private sector partnerships.

District councils also have a good track record. My district council, York city council, has brought in innovative schemes that have tied together private sector finance and council finance to build homes for homeless people.

No Conservative Member can give Labour Members any lessons about partnership between the private sector and the public sector. However, it is important that talk about partnership does not become an excuse that masks poor performance by local authorities, whether Conservative or Labour-controlled. Sadly, all too frequently, Conservative-led local authorities fail to perform or deliver value for money.

As I said a moment ago, as the Member for Parliament for York, I live in North Yorkshire county council, which is Conservative led. Its home help service is under-provided—constituents come to me seeking and needing a home help service that they cannot obtain—and hugely over-priced. For people in North Yorkshire on income support, the cost is £2·40 for two visits a week. Home help visits are built on one-hour blocks, but, in a rural area, travelling times mean that the actual visit is probably only half an hour.

For people on incomes low enough to entitle them to housing benefit, the charge is £4·80 for home help services, if they can get them. For people on a slightly higher, but still low, income, who do not receive benefits, the cost is £7·20 a week. Those are high costs for a badly needed service. In a neighbouring shire county—Labour-controlled Humberside—2 million hours of free home help service are provided to 16,000 people in need.

Let us take the example of the provision of nursery education for three and four-year-olds. In neighbouring Cleveland county council, to the north of North Yorkshire, 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds attend nursery education provided by the council. In Humberside, more than 60 per cent. of three and

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

four-year-olds receive nursery education, but in Conservative-controlled North Yorkshire, the figure is less than 40 per cent.

I can tell the House of my experience as a parent—I say to the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes), unashamedly, a middle-class parent. I wanted my children to have nursery education and we were fortunate enough to obtain it, although not for the whole of the three and four-year period, in the one nursery school in York. That meant a journey across the river, through the city centre to the other side of town for two hours of nursery education for the earliest months and a slightly longer morning period afterwards.

My children were able to benefit from that experience because my wife was not in paid employment at the time, and she drove the children, through the rush hour traffic, to the nursery. She drove home, had an hour or so there and then drove back again to pick up the children.

That service was available, if one was lucky, to people who had the time and resources to travel to obtain it. That is in the urban centre of the county in York. The situation in rural North Yorkshire is worse, and the Conservative-led county council has slashed the programme for increasing the availability of nursery education. Labour authorities like Humberside and Cleveland do not need lessons from Conservatives about the quality of services.

Nursery education matters. A recent study—I admit to the hon. Member for Scarborough that it no doubt came from the sociology department or educational sociology department—by Leeds university showed that children who had had the benefit of nursery education performed significantly better at key stage 1 maths and English. The Government have set up the key stages as a way to measure the performance of children, of schools and of local authorities. If they believe in increasing the opportunities for individuals and in the quality of education, they should be doing what the Labour party promised in its election manifesto—establishing a programme to provide nursery education for every three and four-year-old whose parents want it.

Such an objective cannot be achieved instantly, but we said in our manifesto that we believe that it would be possible to achieve it by the end of the decade. The rate at which North Yorkshire is going means that we shall be a quarter of the way into the next century before that pledge can be met by that Conservative authority. However, in Labour-controlled Cleveland, it is already met.

Let us look at the police service. In 1979, according to the chief constable's report, just over 20,000 offences were reported to the police, and the figure had fallen for three years running. The most recent figures for North Yorkshire show 50,000 recorded offences, and the number is significantly increasing year after year. Crime in North Yorkshire is spiralling out of control.

What has been the response of the Conservative county council? In the five years of the last Labour Government, North Yorkshire received an authorised increase to the police establishment of 155 officers. In the first 10 years, that the Conservatives were in power, from 1979, North Yorkshire received not one single extra police officer, but crime in that period rose from 20,000 to 35,000 reported offences a year.

For the first seven of those 10 years, the council did not even put in a bid to the Home Office for more police to curb crime in the county. It was only when Labour county councillors organised a campaign that it did so. Now, after 14 years, the Conservative Government have provided the county with 50 extra officers, compared to the 155 in the five years of a Labour Government.

It is all very well Conservative Members decrying the efficiency of public sector provision, but what other branch of a public service would be expected to deal with a 2·5 times increase in work load with a 4 per cent. increase in officers available to deal with it? Not to devote resources to curbing crime is a false economy for local authorities, for the people—every one of those 50,000 crimes had a victim—and for businesses. It is in everybody's interest to put the resources into supporting the police in their efforts to tackle crime.

I have compared quality of service. I have compared the quality of nursery education, policing and the home help service provided by Labour and Conservative authorities. People say, "Yes, but there is a price to pay." We heard from the hon. Member for Scarborough about spendthrift Labour councils. We were told that they are always prepared to spend other people's money.

Let us look at the facts. According to the statistical section of the House of Commons Library, which provided some figures for me, the average council tax precept per shire county was as follows. Councils with no overall control had the highest average, with £394 per household; councils under Liberal control—I see that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has left the Chamber—had the second highest, with £378 per household; then came Conservative councils, at £372 per household; cheapest of the lot were Labour-controlled shire counties, at £366 per household.

In my local area and that of the hon. Member for Scarborough, Labour-controlled Cleveland's average council tax per household is £359, Labour-controlled Humberside's average is £366 and Tory North Yorkshire at £368 is the highest of the three. So the statement by the Prime Minister at the Conservative local government conference that Labour councils cost people £100 more is —I am not allowed to use the word in the House—a Scrooge-like economy with the truth. It simply is not so.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has used an entirely specious argument. Is he not aware that, band for band, Conservative councils cost considerably less? My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister drew the right comparison —£100 less in the middle band compared with Labour councils. All that the hon. Gentleman is telling the House is that there are more low-band properities in some Labour areas. We give them much more grant to compensate for the fact that they have more low-band properties. Let him come clean with the House and tell the truth to the nation: Conservative councils always cost less, and band for band a lot less.

Mr. Bayley: Bluff and bluster will not do. What the Minister is saying——

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Give us facts.

Mr. Bayley: Yes, I will give the facts. If we compare one group of council taxpayers in band D with another, the Minister's figures are right. But an independent group of

advisers such as the House of Commons Library statistical section, which does not bear allegiance to the Minister's Department or his party, or to the Labour party, says that the Government's figures are fallacious and specious, because they simply look at band D.

The truth is that the cost per household is lower in Labour counties. That is what people have to pay and that is what matters to them. They are not interested in airy-fairy averages for one band. The Library has given the independent, unbiased figures, which show that overall Labour councils cost us less.

In my area, too, the Labour councils cost people less. The Minister's argument that Conservative-controlled authorities are in the south where house prices are high, and Labour-controlled authorities are in the north where house prices are low, does not hold water, because the three examples that I have used are all in the north.

The Minister's argument does not stand up. He can bluff and bluster as much as he likes, but it is not true that Conservative councils cost less. We should go to an independent source for the true figures, and that is what I have done. I have used not a Labour party source but an independent source.

Mr. Redwood: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is unfair to bring the House of Commons Library service into the argument? It has provided extremely good information in response to the questions asked by hon. Members. Of course, if he asks what are the averages, without taking into account different house values for different bands, he will get one answer. But it is an entirely misleading answer to the question, "Which council gives better value for money?" Band for band, the Conservative councils always set lower council taxes than Labour.

Mr. Bayley: All I can say is that the Minister is a better politician than a statistician. I am comparing across all the bands. The Minister is selecting certain groups of the population and comparing them. I am comparing across the board. The figure that matters is the figure that people pay, and that is the figure I am using.

The choice is not only between cheap and expensive services—although services cost less in Labour areas—but between better and worse services. As I have shown in my examples, people receive better services in Labour county councils such as Cleveland and Humberside. Those councils provide nursery education for a greater proportion of the population. Humberside provides a home help service free of charge for a greater proportion of the population.

How can the trick be achieved? Labour authorities provide better services at lower cost. The answer is obvious. Anyone who has been in business as I have—I set up and run my own business—knows the answer: it is achieved by being more efficient. The figures prove that Labour authorities are more efficient, because they provide better services at less cost.

Conservative Members talk about the need for a partnership between the private and public sectors, because they believe that private sector provision will always be more efficient. They should look to Labour authorities, some of which have resisted compulsory competitive tendering yet have produced better services at less cost than Conservative authorities that have fallen head over heels for CCT.

If Conservative Members are looking for efficiency, they should tell their colleagues in Conservative-led local authorities to look at the efficiency record of Labour-led local authorities, as well as looking at the private sector. Conservative councillors have a lot to learn from better-run Labour local authorities, and they should learn those lessons if they are serious about improving the services to people in their areas.

11.46 am

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I am grateful to the Government for giving me the opportunity to discuss services in local authorities. Perhaps I should say first that one of the greatest problems for Labour-controlled authorities is that they have a split view of what their role is in life. They seem to be confused about whether it is to provide services or jobs. Time and again, we hear the cry that they are defending the jobs of those who work in local authorities. Time and again, they are caught having to decide between providing services and supplying jobs.

Labour authorities have the confused idea that if they do not provide the jobs, no one else will provide them. That is a great fallacy, because the private sector will take on the jobs that are required to provide the services. Surely the most important factor is that it is the role of the local authority to provide good quality service at the cheapest price possible for those who live in the area.

The key is the amount of money that is spent or given by Government to local authorities. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned in his excellent opening speech that some £33,000 million is raised and given to local authorities. That is hardly what one would call a small amount. It is a substantial amount. It is high time that local authorities understood that they should spend the money carefully and provide a good service.

I am a great supporter of contracting out through compulsory competitive tendering, as all Conservative Members must be. It has forced authorities that, until we pushed the measure through, refused to entertain the thought that the private sector should have any involvement in providing services. As we heard earlier from my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), Mr. Jeremy Beecham has said that CCT has opened his eyes to the improvements in cost and quality of delivery.

That is important because it is the compulsory element which has changed matters dramatically for many people in the Labour party. It has made them realise that there are other ways to deliver services and that the private sector is capable of delivering them at least as well as local government, and in most cases much better.

The Local Government Act 1988, which extended competitive tendering to six areas—including refuse collection, street cleaning, buildings cleaning, ground maintenance and catering services—is to be greatly welcomed, not least because it has opened the eyes of many Labour-controlled councils to the idea that services can be contracted out.

I was intrigued by the results of the research on compulsory competitive tendering commissioned by the Department of the Environment from the Institute of Local Government Studies at Birmingham university. It showed some significant benefits. More than 20 per cent. of contracts have now been awarded to private companies; competition has led to the streamlining of the direct service

[Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith]

organisations of local authorities, thereby cutting waste and bureaucracy; and there has been a manual staff reduction of between 17 and 20 per cent., achieved largely without compulsory redundancy. We should remember that initially the doom and gloom merchants in the Labour party were shouting about massive compulsory redundancies, but that has not happened. The research also showed annual average cash savings of more than 6 per cent. and an improvement in the quality of services.

I want to dwell for a moment on the record of my local authority, Labour-controlled Waltham Forest. It has fought the concept of competitive tendering tooth and nail. Because it has dragged its heels, it now needs to search for savings. It failed to find those savings by embracing the excellent concept of CCT initiated by the Conservative Government.

The council imposed a series of very high community charges, but its inefficiency in collecting them resulted in its having to impose additional surcharges year after year on my constituents in Chingford—yet they tend to be the sort of people who pay their community charge on time and in full. The council continually refuses to embrace competitive tendering to make the necessary savings, despite the fact that there have been some significant savings in other councils.

It is interesting to note that, although the allotments section of the council's recreation department has a budget of only approximately £50,000 a year, the overheads for running that section are some £26,000 a year. By anybody's standards, that is absurd. It is one area that just illustrates how the intelligent use of competitive tendering would help. It also highlights the nonsense of the policies followed by the Labour-controlled council.

By comparison, when that council was forced to contract out the Leyton leisure lagoon, great savings were made. Pressure had to be put on the council to do that because it had fought the idea tooth and nail. The savings meant that the subsidy per swimmer dropped from £6 to £3, and I hope that eventually it will disappear altogether. The council did not want to do that, but it was forced to do so under great pressure from local people and the local Conservative group, resulting in a saving of £156,000.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I am interested in my hon. Friend's remarks about his local council. My local council in Blackpool is also Labour controlled. In the old, happier days, it had a Conservative council, which proposed the introduction of CCT. I well remember the howls of anguish from the Labour party; it was as though the Conservative party had tried to introduce some new form of Armageddon. Of course, no one now talks about the standard of service being provided because there are excellent street cleaning and parks services, which are provided by private sector organisations. In the old days, when we suggested the introduction of street cleansing services, from the reaction of the Labour party one would have thought that we were trying to introduce ethnic cleansing.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I agree with my hon. Friend, who is right in what he says.

I have been trying to show that had my Labour-controlled council embraced CCT a little earlier and more vigorously, it would not now be in such financial difficulties. It would have already made the necessary savings while improving the quality of services, which in so many areas are well below standard.

I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that the experience of Waltham Forest shows that centralised services such as the direct service organisation and direct labour organisation have not been restructured. We must do something to force local authorities to do that. It is all very well to make savings by contracting out building and highway works, catering and so on, but the central organisations remain staffed and manned very much in the same way and in the same numbers as before. All the other areas therefore have to bear the extra costs of still having a large group centrally administering something which, to a large degree, no longer really exists. We must find ways to force local authorities to change the structure across the board. If they will not do it through common sense, they must be driven to do so, or the council tax payers of Chingford will end up paying extra for services from which, quite frankly, no one reaps any benefit.

The old DLO in Waltham Forest did not send out its invoices for well over a year, or even longer, with the result that when it finally did so it was not paid because people said that they could not recall ever having had the service, leaving £3 million of unpaid invoices. The commercial acumen of some of those organisations is quite staggering. There is a whole mine of information like that sitting in Waltham Forest.

I am glad that the Government are considering extending CCT and have set out some of the key areas in their document "Competing for Quality". Private firms will have a fair chance to compete for local authority contracts. There will be a separation of client and contractor responsibility to ensure that those conducting the competitive process have no direct interest in the result. The timing of various stages within the tendering process has been laid down to ensure that outside contractors have sufficient time—that is important—to prepare bids. One of the ways in which local authorities have managed to get around CCT has been by giving contractors little time to put a sensible bid together.

Again looking back to the Waltham Forest experience, prior to the local mananagement of schools, the council was very quick to get out the four-year school cleansing contracts—but it did it for all 70 to 80 schools in the borough, so that any contractor that did not have the necessary capability at that stage found it impossible to bid for the contract at such short notice. I am glad that the Government intend to ensure that the contractors will have time to prepare their bids. To ensure a level playing field for those tendering, the items that a local authority can or cannot take into account in the tender valuation will be specified. I am glad that local authorities will have to publish rigorous internal accounting covering any white collar work that they undertake.

Local authority services have become a political football in the sense that Labour authorities fought the issue on the ground that only they should provide those services and jobs. They were becoming confused. More and more, local authorities are realising that by making savings and improving services, they are doing what they are meant to do—making sure that local residents do not pay more than they should for services that are dispensed in their name to those who need access to them.

Local authorities must provide local services as cost effectively as possible. That does not mean that they must

provide jobs in the local area. Those will come as a result of the local authority being the best provider of the service or of its being decided that the private sector is the best source of the relevant service.

I fully welcome all that the Government are doing and only urge them strongly to ensure that local councils such as my own can be directed further and faster in the distribution to the private sector of essential services.

12.1 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): My background is in local government, as a member of Ipswich council since 1973 until May last year. I was fortunate, or unfortunate, enough to become leader of that council at the same time that Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister, so I know that of which I speak.

Ipswich council has an interesting history. At the time of the last war, Ipswich county borough—known then, and even today by some older residents, as the corporation—ran all the services now run by Ipswich borough council Suffolk county council, and Anglian Water. It produced its own electricity and gas, looked after the town's poor and needy, and had an embryonic health service. Nationalisation and the establishment of the Department of Health and Social Security took some of those powers away, but from the 1940s until the early 1970s the corporation ran Ipswich.

It was a partnership in that business men served on the council, and the council worked with business men. The council drained marshy areas and then sold or let that land for business use. It was a fully functioning, local democracy—a partnership between all the people in the town and the corporation. It is totally beyond me why that arrangement had to be changed in the early 1970s. It was only after the so-called reforms of 1974 created so much duplication between Anglian Water, Ipswich borough council and Suffolk county council that concern was expressed about the cost of local government. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will acknowledge that it is true of their own areas.

Since those so-called reforms, there has been pressure on local government finance from central Government of all political colours. The situation became much worse in 1979, when Mrs. Thatcher became Prime Minister. That was partly to do with the fact that her dear dad, Alderman Roberts, was kicked off Grantham council, and she never forgave local government.

A war was waged by central Government against local government during the whole of the 1980s. I take heart from one or two comments by Government spokesmen recently to the effect that that war may be coming to an end.

One tactic was to use the word "partnership" instead of "privatisation", which is what is really meant in many cases. The Government say that they believe in partnership between local authorities and the private sector and between central and local government. I will cite one or two examples of the Government's assertions not being reflected by their actions

I refer first to compulsory—not compulsive—competitive tendering. Ipswich objected to being compelled to adopt that policy, but it was the law so Ipswich complied and got on with it. Ipswich won its own building works and street cleansing contracts—it collects its own bins. It maintains all the services provided by its own direct labour organisation.

In addition, the authority has tendered outside Ipswich and maintains Liberal-controlled Colchester's housing stock. It also landscapes parks and gardens in other areas that have Conservative-controlled councils. Competitive tendering has been a success for Ipswich council, for the moment—but if one delves deeper, one sees that it will not be that way for ever, because the Government have not established a level playing field for compulsory competitive tendering.

Direct labour organisations must make a 5 per cent. return on capital, but the private sector does not—and it does not attempt to do so in hard times. The council must make a profit every year, or it would be in danger of being closed down. That is not true of the private sector. Successful councils such as Ipswich have been threatened by the Audit Commission for competing outside their boundaries. It is said that, in effect, a council DLO can compete only for its own work in its own geographical area—and that if it loses a contract once, it will lose it for ever and the service in question will be closed down. No one can argue that that it is a fair way of asking council workers to compete against private sector workers.

As I said, for the moment Ipswich council is winning those battles, but the first battle that it loses will mean that a whole raft of jobs will be lost and the service will be transferred for ever from the public to the private sector. That is the Government's real agenda.

Ipswich council, as with councils of all political colours, has always attempted to work with the town's private sector, but has consistently found itself blocked in those efforts by Government regulations—though, to be fair, I suspect that many of them are Treasury driven. One example is Wherstead road in Ipswich, which became congested. There was a factory nearby surrounded by a large area of land which the factory did not need.

About six years ago, that factory had financial problems, so the council bought the land, which amounted to five and a half acres. Together with Conservative-controlled Suffolk county council, Ipswich council reached an agreement whereby, instead of knocking down half of Wherstead road, a new road would be taken through that open land. Agreement was then reached to have ownership of the land transferred to Wimpey, which would build a number of homes for sale, a number for transfer to housing associations to rent and a number to Ipswich council to include in a sheltered scheme.

That was a perfect example of co-operation between two authorities—one Labour and one Conservative, a housing association, and a private sector builder. The project was blocked by the Department of the Environment on the ground that it was a barter deal. Five years later, we still do not have all the homes that could have been built under that scheme. That is not an example of the Government helping, being a partner with local government, or aiding local government to work in partnership with the private sector.

I cite a more recent example. Ipswich council has a terrible homelessness problem. In line with Government thinking, the council decided to lease homes from private individuals to let, rather than put the homeless into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It leased 100 homes for that purpose. There are a number of other homes that it wants but cannot lease because the owners want to lease

[Mr. Jamie Cann]

them for much longer than three years. Why cannot Ipswich council lease them for more than three years? Because it runs counter to the Government's capital expenditure controls. The scheme, which would help the private sector, the council and the homeless, is blocked by the Government.

Ipswich council has a 10 per cent. stake in the Building Preservation Trust—not a big organisation which involves a group of people and the council. Every year it buys an old property of value to the town, does it up and resells it. The proceeds are then used to buy the next property—often with a profit. As that scheme involves the council, even though it is a minor party, it comes under Government capital expenditure controls, which makes it difficult for the trust to operate. All those factors show that the Government want to stop councils doing things, not encourage them to do things with the private sector.

Some 20 years ago, when I first became involved in local government, people who could not afford houses went on a council house waiting list and within a year or so they obtained one. Such houses were reasonably cheap, well maintained by the local authority and popular with the people. However, that is now a forgotten dream in Ipswich as the council has not been allowed to build homes for goodness knows how long.

We were told that the private sector would take up the slack, It did: it built many four-bedroom, two-bathroom, double-garage homes that people could not afford to buy or rent. It did not produce low-cost rental properties. The Government's housing programme is a total failure. At least they decided to transfer some resources from the councils to housing associations so that they could become the prime producer of low-cost rented homes, but that has not happened.

The homes are becoming more and more expensive, the Government grants are being reduced every year and housing association rents are starting to move out of the low-cost band. In Ipswich we are having great difficulty in allocating housing association properties. People would rather wait for council houses. The failure of the Government's housing programme has prevented us from working with the private sector to produce low-cost homes and is making the position for the housing associations even worse. It seems to many of us that when the Government talk about housing provision they believe that it is all right for the housing associations, private individuals and building firms to produce homes for sale, but never, in any circumstances, for the council to build homes for rent. Why not? We need homes and they are not being produced by anyone else.

The Government's care in the community policy has not yet come about. The Minister made great play of the fact that the Government have handed responsibility for care in the community to councils, as though that were an act of faith. In fact, they have handed care in the community to councils, but not allocated them sufficient money to do the job properly. I prophesy that in the next year our surgeries will be full of people whose needs have not been properly assessed because the council cannot afford to provide for them or whose needs simply will not be met. That will be the result of the budgetary shortfall of care in the community, which will affect hon. Members from both sides of the House. That is another example of the Government's talk about partnership proving to be nonsense.

I do not believe what the Government say about partnership. What happened in the 1980s and is still happening today is that Whitehall, quangos and the market are slowly but surely taking power away from elected local authorities. It is time to stop that.

12.15 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): Few things better illustrate the Conservatives' mastery of both the political and intellectual arguments of the 1980s than privatisation. In practical and philosophical terms, that policy has become irreversible. Once discussed only at the edges of political life, it is now firmly on centre stage. Privatisation and competitive tendering in local government form a vital part of it.

In the 1970s, there appeared to be certain unquestioned assumptions about the running of public services. It was generally believed that direct provision was the only effective way of operating, and that belief went more or less unchallenged. There was a resistance to change at both local and national level. Therefore, it might appear somewhat ironic—but when set against the lessons of history, it will be shown not to be so—that the Conservative party produced the radical changes of the past 10 to 15 years, spurred on by new thinkers such as my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities and Chris Chope, who regrettably is, temporarily, no longer a Member of Parliament.

In the meantime, the Labour party seems to have become frozen in the past—and not only in this sector of policy. It seems to be more afraid of vested interests and change itself, and has an antipathy to the private sector. Of those three reasons why, I suspect, the Labour party generally oppose the introduction of competitive tendering and private contracting in local government, the worst is the last—antipathy to the private sector. It is based purely on an ideological presumption that stems from years ago. However, it is belied by the facts revealed by any rational assessment of economic progress in the past 50 years.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman will be aware of Lewisham council's attempts to regenerate, improve, invigorate and sustain the future of Beckenham Place park, which adjoins his constituency and mine. It is a major scheme, not without flaws, largely based on a partnership between a private company—the David Lloyd clubs—and the council, which will benefit the facilities for the people in that part of the world.

It cannot be denied that the scheme needs much thought, but why have Lewisham council's attempts to promote the scheme been faced with unremitting hostility from Tory-controlled Bromley council? Will the hon. Gentleman condemn Bromley council for its blindness and antipathy towards the involvement of the private sector, and do what he can to ensure that residents' interests are protected and that extremely imaginative, innovative and beneficial scheme for the part of south London that we both represent goes ahead?

Mr. Merchant: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's comments about Beckenham Place park, about which I was talking to representatives of Lewisham borough only yesterday. The management of the park has been put out

to a private operator, which I wholeheartedly welcome. It shows that some local Labour authorities accept the advantages of private contracting. I only wish that that lesson was followed by many other local authorities.

The specific and separate issue of the development of Beckenham Place park involves a plan to change the park's nature and has nothing to do with the privatisation of services. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the opposition came specifically from local residents. It is not a matter of Bromley borough authority deciding to oppose a plan proposed by Lewisham borough. Bromley borough did so as a result of the major pressure that was brought to bear on it by local people.

If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the views of local people should not be fully taken into account and weighed in the balance, he is making a major error of judgment about planning policy. He will also know that the planning application has been called in by the Department. However, I am in danger of straying from the point and I shall return to my speech.

The Labour party's approach to competitive tendering and privatisation in local government is basically one of turning in the opposite direction, because it is locked in the past. Therefore, it has devolved upon Conservative-controlled local authorities to make all the running in this area, even though there has been some resistance to it, even in some Conservative-controlled authorities. That is understandable, for we are talking about innovative policies.

What has changed principally, though, during the past 10 to 15 years in this area? It can be typified in three phases. The first phase has been the voluntary pursuit of the various privatisation options by those particularly go-ahead local authorities which set the pace. The success in those areas led to phase 2: the compulsory application of compulsory competitive tendering, which has been necessary to overcome some of the ill-judged resistance. The third phase is that into which we are now moving—the much more wholehearted pursuit of the concept of the enabling authority, to which I shall return.

Apart from some specific earlier examples, the first major stride in this direction came in the Local Government Act 1980, which required compulsory competitive tendering to be introduced for new construction, building, maintenance and highways. Then, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) eloquently pointed out, the Local Government Act 1988 extended competition in local government services into six other major areas. What is the advantage of all that? People might say that that is purely ideologically driven. The answer to that question comes in the savings that have inevitably and indisputably flowed from these policies.

A recent Audit Commission report, "Realising the Benefits of Competition", showed that services such as refuse collection had produced savings of 12·4 per cent., and that building cleaning had produced savings of 20·6 per cent. These are not marginal savings: they are dramatic and major savings in areas of high public expenditure.

In the report "Competitive Tendering for Local Authority Services—Initial Experiences" a Labour-controlled local authority chief executive is quoted as saying:

"There is an awful lot that comes from CCT. There is much greater knowledge of particular service areas. It exposes an awful lot of inefficiencies formerly taken for granted. We are a more efficient, slimmer organisation. It has had real and definite benefits and not just in defined services."

As for the oft-quoted Jeremy Beecham, I know him well, so I can attach credibility to the quotation in the *Municipal Journal*, where he said:

"Compulsory competitive tendering has brought some cost effectiveness and genuine savings which might not otherwise have been achieved."

Knowing the difficulties that Jeremy Beecham has had over the years, struggling with the mammoth machinery of Newcastle city council, I am not at all surprised to see that he has been forced to admit that, by introducing compulsory competitive tendering, he can make considerable savings.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that the essence of that quotation is that it is the compulsory element which has forced Jeremy Beecham, and others like him, to go down that road and thus learn—not because of their desire to do so but because they have been forced to—that the reality is that there is a new world out there from which they can reap the benefit?

Mr. Merchant: Absolutely. There are some intelligent and enlightened leaders of Labour authorities who wish to go much further down this path, because they see the practical benefits that can flow to their authorities and to the citizens of their areas but who are prevented from doing so either by their groups, which fear that they cannot move in a new direction, or, unfortunately, by the local authority trade unions, which stick their feet in and can exercise far too great power within the local Labour party machine and therefore stop these reforms and changes taking place.

That was a specific problem in Newcastle, which Jeremy Beecham and his colleagues in the leadership of the council had to face. Although they might not be prepared to admit it publicly, I am sure that some of these Labour leaders privately very much welcome the compulsion that came with the Act, which has forced them to go down a road that they wanted to go down and therefore enabled them to defy the forces that tried to prevent them.

The local authority in the area that I represent, Bromley—the Minister has already been generous enough to refer to Bromley's leading role—has cast itself in the role of an enabling authority, with great success. I pay particular tribute to the excellent leader of the authority, Dennis Barkway, and his team of councillors and officers who have assiduously pursued this option with great success. They have pushed forward the boundaries in a quiet but effective way. They have not sought glory for themselves but have attempted to improve the quality and efficiency of public services for the citizens of Bromley.

The House may be interested in the list of public services that Bromley has been able to put out to the private sector. They are building maintenance, street cleaning, vehicle maintenance, refuse collection, ground maintenance, building cleaning, civic centre catering, public toilet cleaning, school meals, leisure centre management, highways maintenance, waste disposal, street lighting, social services homes, pest control.

Mr. Dowd: On the question of social services homes, will the hon. Gentleman be so kind as to tell the House how the fraud squad investigation is going into the

[Mr. Dowd]

conduct of the chair of social services in Bromley over the relationship between him and the American company that was hoping to take over those homes?

Mr. Merchant: The hon. Gentleman will know that that matter is at present sub judice. If, however, he wishes me to go into local government corruption, he might do well to investigate the corruption that was spawned by the incestuous centralisation of power in those Labour-controlled local authorities that have been under Labour control for many years.

As someone who worked for many years as a journalist in the north-east of England, I know very well the history of local government corruption in the north-east. If the hon. Gentleman wanted to do so, we could debate it for hours on end. I am sure, however, that he would find that it was not in either his or his party's interests to do so.

Let me continue with my list. I was about to reach the more interesting services that Bromley has put out to private sector. I refer to the professional services that the Government are encouraging local authorities to look at, and which can, with a little more difficulty—because of the nature of the quality definitions that need to be laid down more thoroughly—be done successfully.

Bromley has proved this—I believe very effectively. I refer to the architects department, engineering services, computers, part of the youth service, printing and stationery, and at present—one of the most dramatic—the privatisation of the exchequer services, including the collection of council tax and payroll services, which will produce a cost saving of 25 per cent.

In addition, two other major areas of local government responsibility that have now passed, at the council's wish, out of the council's direct hands, are housing, now taken over by a housing association, Broomleigh, and many of the schools that have opted to go grant maintained. Bromley may shortly reach a threshold where the majority of—indeed, all—the secondary schools will move out of the local authority's direct control. That will achieve the objective of moving all those services into a more effective private sector. Some people might think that that is an exhaustive list, but Bromley council is still trying to find other services that can be contracted out and is examining a short list at the moment.

What about the savings? I am told that the authority has calculated that it is producing savings of almost £13 million a year. Those are not one-off savings, but savings which will recur year after year, of which about £6 million is direct saving from the contracting out of services and a further £7 million of interest which has accrued as a result principally of the sale of housing stock to a housing association. On each of those services, those are average savings of between 15 and 20 per cent.—considerable savings in cash and percentage terms, which go to the benefit of the people who live in the area.

What comes next? There is a need to continue to press for greater savings, efficiency and improved quality. Of course, there is still resistance from many local authorities —few have such a go-ahead approach as Bromley. That resistance was one of the principal reasons for the White Paper "Competing for Quality", to which my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford referred and which will continue to make inroads into the options that are available for further contracting out and competitive tendering. My hon. Friend said that there were problems in some areas as some local authorities have found ways of cheating on competitive tendering, so we must ensure a level playing field for the necessary disciplines.

The White Paper specifically stresses the need to look at the wide range of professional and technical services. I believe that the Government are aiming at figures of about 90 per cent. of construction-related services, 15 per cent. of corporate and administrative services, 33 per cent. of legal services, 25 per cent. of financial and personnel services, and about 80 per cent. of computing services being available for competitive tendering. Those all seem to be admirable objectives. They are areas which were not perhaps questioned before, but, as Bromley has shown, they are not only effective but can lead to great savings for local council tax payers.

I have talked about what has happened, what is happening and what should happen, but why is it necessary? The alternative argument—that local authorities should run services directly themselves through their own departments—might at first sound quite persuasive. It is argued, first, that that is in the public good, because local authorities operate in the public good; secondly, that there is no element of profit or possibly exploitation; and, thirdly, that it enables easy long-term plananing with no uncertainty about who will provide the service and how, that it can be centrally organised and, therefore, that all the economies of scale flow from that.

Those arguments look fine on paper and no doubt appeal to tidy bureaucratic minds who see the world in terms of intricate planning. Like the Soviet central planning system, which operated in a macro-economic sense, local government planning in such an intricate form is also doomed to failure. It is no coincidence that Soviet central planning failed so spectacularly because the structure of any rigid arrangement bears within it the seeds of its own destruction. That is true of local government set-ups in Liverpool, Lewisham, Newcastle or anywhere else.

My experience in Newcastle convinced me that the overriding objective of a huge local government machine that runs a big city council becomes running the machine; the machine runs for its own benefit, not for anyone else's. The reality is that, without the pressure of a commercial ethos, competition and some division between purchasers and providers, there is no incentive to stay trim and efficient and to provide quality. Inefficiency, overmanning, poor quality and bad practices creep in. The machine ends up operating as a suppliers' monopoly dream, veering increasingly towards operating only in the interests of the machine and its staff, rather than the people for whom it should operate—the forgotten consumers and citizens of the area.

I do not want to be misinterpreted and I am not casting aspersions on individual local government officers. Perhaps not all my colleagues will agree with me, but, in my experience over the years in dealing with local government officers, I have usually found them dedicated, helpful and very efficient. The problem lies with the machine as a whole. The size and nature of the machine mean that it is not designed to ensure maximum efficiency, because there is no competitive element, no testing, no pressure and no commercial application. That is why the system has failed and is unable to provide what the public require at the cost they are prepared to pay.

Therefore, I believe that it is in the interests of local government itself, of its officers and, above all, of the ordinary citizen to press ahead with contracting out and enabling authorities, not only as best practice but as universal practice.

12.35 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) left the Chamber immediately after his intervention on the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith). The hon. Gentleman waxed lyrical about the qualities of the late and unlamented Conservative council in Blackpool, which was in fact notorious for its financial inefficiency and horrible planning mistakes. He should consider why, at the previous local elections in Blackpool, there was the biggest swing to Labour in the entire county. There can be only two answers and perhaps both are right. The first is that the hon. Gentleman's assessment of what people thought about the services that they were not getting from the Conservatives was entirely different from that of the electorate. The second is that the electorate in Blackpool were voting against the service that they had been getting from the Government in the previous few years. I think that both answers were true in that instance.

I begin by picking up a couple of things that the Minister said. He made a side swipe at Lancashire, as Ministers generally do whenever they get the opportunity—perhaps not so frequently as against Derbyshire, but we are still high on the list. He said that Lancashire was one of the main culprits in setting a high council tax, but I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) in this connection. If we take the average precept—what people will have to pay—Lancashire comes 10th in the league of 30 or so counties. People there will pay £393·37. Of the nine counties that are charging more than that, four are Conservative controlled: in Buckinghamshire people will pay £416, in Hertfordshire £419, in Somerset £450 and in Surrey £444. Incidentally, Derbyshire is lower down the list.

The Minister also poked fun at leaders of local authorities, specifically Labour leaders, who come to London to lobby Ministers for more money. It seems an obvious thing to do if one believes that one is not getting enough money. I have been involved at least twice in lobbying directly on behalf of my authority.

Mr. Bayley: It is indeed a sensible thing to do. In my part of the country, on the other side of the Penines, Labour-controlled Humberside county council lobbied for more money and got a better settlement as a result. Conservative-controlled North Yorkshire county council did not make representations to the Department of the Environment because it did not want to rock the boat in its own party and therefore did not receive a better settlement. As a consequence, the average precept in Humberside is lower than it is in Conservative-controlled North Yorkshire.

Mr. Pickthall: That is a very instructive parable. I have been trying to point out not only the common sense of doing what my hon. Friend the Member for York describes, but the fact that Lancashire, with many other authorities, was down here to talk not about more money as a slice of the national economy, but about the way in which the settlement was calculated and the way in which it was distributed. We were arguing about the area cost adjustment, which we believe works to the disbenefit of Lancashire. We were arguing about the money that had been taken out——

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman should remember that what I said was that every year Labour leaders say that they have been given additional statutory functions by the House and by the Government. I was replying to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), who claimed that councils were always losing functions. I said that Labour leaders pointed out, often correctly, that they had increased functions from Government. I was not ridiculing them or saying that they should not make that point. On the council tax, Lancashire's band C charge is £472. The shire average is £406 and Hampshire's is £328. That shows that Lancashire is a high-taxing authority.

Mr. Pickthall: The figures that I gave were for the average precept. I understand that one can pick a band or a different way in which to calculate and come up with different league tables. The figures that I used were from the *Public Finance and Accountancy* journal of 12 March 1993 and were based on Department of the Environment data. My point was that the deputations in which we were involved were concerned about the distribution and about what we believed to be a corruption in the way in which the global sum of revenue support grant was distributed—a corruption embodied in the structure of the standard spending assessments, to which I shall refer later.

Two or three weeks ago, the Audit Commission produced a draft report, which does not seem to have made much of a stir, although it should have done. The draft report says that the Government have taken such severe and detailed control of local government spending powers that local government powers are now "largely cosmetic". Coming from one of the Government's most powerful watchdogs, which was spoken of approvingly by the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), that is a most salutary judgment and one which should make us shudder a little.

That judgment raises two important questions for me, for most of my hon. Friends and for those with a background in local government. First, why on earth does anyone remain a local councillor? Whether councillors are Labour, Tory, Liberal Democrat, nationalist or whatever, day by day and week by week they have to do the Government's dirty work. They are unpaid and take the flak for Government cuts. They preside over decisions that they cannot avoid because they have already been settled by the way in which the SSAs are distributed and they damage the interests of the people whom those councillors seek to defend and represent. It is hard to escape the conclusion that many councillors are motivated largely by a passionate desire to mitigate the Government's vindictiveness against the people among whom they live.

Secondly, and more importantly, there has been a fundamental shift of power since 1979 which was detailed graphically by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann). There has been a switch in power away from local democracy and towards central Government, and away from local democracy towards Government-appointed individuals and Government-appointed quangos responsible to no electorate. I recently saw an

[Mr. Pickthall]

estimate of around 42,000 for the number of people that the Government have placed in quango positions of one kind or another. I do not know whether that is an accurate figure, but it would not surprise me if it were.

We must not underestimate the depth and significance of the process. I am not convinced—and I do not think that any of my hon. Friends are convinced—by the kinder words that the Government have spoken about local government recently. The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities is an embodiment of the old adage, "Speak softly and carry a big stick". I am convinced that the historic system of balance and shared power between central Government and local government is being destroyed. Personally, I have no problems with the notion of dismantling venerable structures that have outlived their purpose and replacing them with better structures which serve people more efficiently and democratically, but we must consider what is being put in the place of our local government structure—and the answer is increasing centralisation.

The hon. Member for Beckenham referred with understandable distaste to incestuous over-centralisation, but that is what is going on around us now. The hon. Gentleman spoke vigorously about the size of the local government machine and said that it was the machine that was out of control and not the individuals in it. Europe apart, what bigger machine is there than national Government? It is an enormous machine which cannot be stopped or altered, save by a general election. The test of the increasing centralisation that is taking place around us must be what Ministers and Conservative Members generally would be saying if a Labour Government were doing the same thing to local government. They would be howling blue murder and talking about the Soviet Union, the former East Germany and all the rest. It would be interesting to hear any one of them honestly comment on what is happening.

I read a report in this morning's paper about the Government's plan for the teaching of English—just one aspect of life which is being taken away from the control of local government and local people—which said that the Government propose to extend their power over how English is spoken in schools and to make children study a compulsory list of great authors. I do not have much problem with the latter proposal, but in relation to the first, the article says:

> "Understanding of regional dialects was not an essential part of English lessons, David Pascall, the head of the National Curriculum Council, said."

The fact that the Government are now trying to centralise control over the way in which we speak says volumes about their general philosophy in running the country. Almost all Opposition Members present have strong characteristic regional accents while virtually no Conservative Member present has. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), the Whip, is an honourable and welcome exception. The Conservatives talk alike and think alike and believe that the rest of us should be brought into line. Their attitude to local government is exactly the same.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) made a number of points about the whole business of the creation of quangos and the removal of elected members from one organisation after another and I shall try not to repeat them.

The subject of the debate—partnership between the public and private sectors in delivering local government services—sounds fine. No one could quarrel with the Minister's list of major projects between the private and public sectors. I am sure that they are all fine projects and that they are welcome. Partnership is a good and splendid word. However, in many quarters we are actually experiencing a series of forced separations and not partnership. Whatever one's view of the principle of compulsory competitive tendering, CCT would not be complusory in a partnership. It would not be controlled by centrally imposed rules and regulations which weight the whole game against local authorities. I am desperately trying to avoid using the phrase "level playing field" because it is a particularly appalling cliché.

Local authorities should certainly be allowed and encouraged to seek competitive tendering in their own ways. They should be able to search for the best combination in their own local authorities. A great deal will depend on the character of the local area, what is happening to the economy and whether the area is industrial or rural. In a partnership, local authority service units should be able to compete on equal terms with private sector groups for both public and private services. In many cases, I believe that they would win. On the other hand, in many cases of competitive tendering we have seen jobs, working conditions and the lives of the people working in those services destroyed in order to anticipate and undercut loss-leading bids from the private sector.

I am sure that I am not the only hon. Member who has met school cleaners and school caterers who have worked in schools for many years but who have suddenly had to give up their jobs because their hours have been cut and they can no longer afford to work. In some cases, wages have been cut. That has occurred in the hospital service. I have met school cleaners who were in tears because they felt that they were part of the schools in which they had worked. In some cases, they had worked in the schools for 20 years. They did much more than what they were paid for, but that service was wiped out by the system.

According to the line taken by the Association of County Councils, where a choice is to be made between public and private provision, there should be a context which gives no financial advantage either way. Government systems are set up in such a way as to make it impossible for the public sector to compete. My hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich dealt with that point. That process is a matter of dogma and it has nothing to do with the efficiency of delivering services.

The Government's campaign to emasculate local authorities has been extraordinarily consistent across a wide range of service provision. In fact, one must almost admire that consistency. For example, in education the opting-out system has seen the Government consistently changing the rules to weight the scales against the "no" votes even though—or perhaps because—the response has in most cases confirmed public confidence in the local education authorities. That is certainly the case in Lancashire, where the majority of the ballots have been against opt-outs. As we all know—is repeated on many occasions—most opt-outs occur in Conservative local authorities.

Public sector higher education was removed from local authority control in 1989 and the colleges were confiscated and given to gangs of business men—some of them, no doubt, very successfully, but the idea behind the move is the important point: the new governing bodies are hand picked by Tory Ministers and they have the power to re-elect themselves almost in perpetuity.

Now further education colleges and sixth form colleges have been removed and placed under the same kind of control. Governors are appointed in a similar way. For example, a sixth form college in Lancashire used to have among its governors two Labour and two Conservative representatives of the local education authority. That representation was a fair reflection of the situation in the authority. The two Labour governors were dismissed while the two Conservative governors were placed on the new governing body, to be joined by the local Conservative Member, the wife of the Conservative Member next door and the wife of the Conservative Member of the European Parliament. That is a small example of what is happening all over the place, and the appointments are made centrally. In both higher and further education, the funding mechanism has been placed in the hands of quangos which are not elected and do not even contain elected members. Those quangos specifically exclude LEAs.

We hear that the careers service is to be hived off from local democratic control and given to quangos. I cannot speak for careers services across the country, but in Lancashire the service is particularly successful and well regarded. Local authorities no longer have the right to appoint representatives to local health authorities. Again, we have been reduced to quangos which are appointed and paid by the Government whereas before the much abused and reviled councillors of all kinds did that job without payment.

For some time, local authorities have not had the right to appoint people to water authorities and water committees. Police authorities are to have their local authority representation cut. I was in a group of Conservative and Labour Members who met representatives of the Lancashire police committee a fortnight ago. The Conservatives, magistrates representatives, Labour representatives and the chief constable all said, "Don't do this: it is anti-democratic and six councillors cannot possibly represent an authority the size of Lancashire." Interestingly, the fiercest critic was the chief constable.

An environmental pollution agency is shortly to be established. It will remove responsibility for waste disposal from local authorities. Non-domestic rates are being removed from local control. Regional tribunals—quangos—have been set up to deal with special needs appeals. I have no problem about regional tribunals, but I have a tremendous problem about tribunals that are not democratically responsible to anyone being able to impose on local authorities vast charges for special needs which the authorities may not be able to meet because they have not had the central Government money to do so.

Above all, the use and abuse of SSAs and capping has put local authorities to the sword. The cynical manipulation of the area cost adjustment has redirected billions of pounds to Tory authorities in the south-east and away from the provinces, if I may call them that. In Lancashire alone, that amounts to a Government fine of £100 on every council tax bill and it will not be much different in other northern and western counties. That range of powers destroys the democratic functioning of local government—Conservative as well as Labour. The Government are about the destruction of democratic local government and we must ask once again what their response would be if a Labour Government were the perpetrators.

The Government have become accustomed to latching on to a few local authorities that, over the years, have reacted to Government hostility. No doubt in some cases they have over-compensated with a ferocity equal to that of the Government. The Government have tried to smear all local government, no matter what the political control, and their agenda has been clear; people are told that if they vote Labour their local authority will be cut and, if possible, ruined. If electors insist on voting Labour, as they sometimes stubbornly do, the Government will destroy that Labour council. That was the campaign waged against the metropolitan authorities and it is now the function of the Local Government Commission for England to destroy many Labour shire counties.

The Government cannot cope with the reality that what might seem from London to be leafy and suburban shires elect Labour-controlled or Liberal authorities with no overall control. They will do almost anything to stifle those authorities. They have failed to realise that many of those shires, such as Cumbria, Northumberland, Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire, have been fearfully damaged by Thatcherism in the past 14 years and are unlikely ever to be predominantly Tory again. Their heavy industry has been removed, their manufacturing has been decimated, the public transport infrastructure has been wrecked and when rail is privatised there will be even further damage. Now even rural and agricultural communities are being thrown into disarray and even penury.

Increasingly, shire counties, like other local authorities, have had to step in to generate economic activity to shore up the crumbling elements of the private sector, to bolster training, to help the unemployed. The hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) got quite worked up about the virtues of the market, which he described as the best system ever devised for delivering goods and services. I will not go into that argument with him, but he should recognise that the market is also a brutal system from which people at the bottom end of it suffer. Occasionally, and often when there is a recession, people have to be rescued from the market.

I am extremely proud to be a Lancashire county councillor, although I shall no longer be one after a couple of weeks, and to have been part of a successful and popular authority. In the Thatcher years, Lancashire trebled nursery places, despite a funding system which militates against it. All children are admitted to school at the start of the year in which they will be five. It has the best governor information service and governor support service for schools in the United Kingdom. Until Government cuts last year, it had by far the highest level of discretionary awards for students. It is the fifth lowest spender on education administration—less than 3 per cent. of its total budget. It has made a 50 per cent. increase in youth provision and has an unrivalled system of welfare rights and public information networks in every town and almost every community in Lancashire. All the key advances in public transport, such as they have been, have been to the credit of the local authority. In particular, I wish to mention Lancashire's green audit, which reached

[Mr. Pickthall]

the final of the United Nation's conference in Rio and is nationally recognised as a major venture in environmental protection.

Lancashire Enterprises Ltd. is closely associated with the county council and has secured more than 20,000 jobs in the past 10 years. It has a huge programme of work with public and private sectors alike. It is involved in Europe, in training and in developing industrial premises. When the Government dumped Leyland DAF and said, "No intervention", Lancashire county council and Lancashire Enterprises got stuck in and promoted a management buy-out. Lancashire Enterprises will, we hope, be taking over much of the land—there are about 200 acres—to develop it as an industrial park. That has all been achieved despite the desperate financial situation in which Lancashire, along with all other authorities, has been put in recent years.

When I am out on doorsteps canvassing for the county elections, as I shall be doing again tomorrow, I shall be trying to persuade the electors to vote Labour and keep Lancashire Labour, but I will also be doing something that I hope Tory supporters will be doing: I will be trying to persuade people to vote for democracy, to say that the Government are instituting a Whitehall Conservative central office tyranny and that we, the electorate, will not put up with it.

1.3 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): One would sometimes think that those who reported on political matters outside this place discovered my constituency only after the events of 9 April last year. They got the events of last year wrong, and I regret the way that they have concentrated on reporting, still inaccurately, the events in my constituency since then.

Many of the reports come from quarters that I hold in great esteem. Only recently an article appeared in a Sunday newspaper all about my constituency. It seems to be the vogue to say that 10,000 people are out of work in Basildon. There have never been 10,000 people unemployed in my constituency. The figure is 6,500. That is far too many, but I am delighted to say that we had the largest drop in unemployment in the south-east last month. I hope that, with a sensible partnership between the private and public sectors in local government, that trend will continue.

The article allowed a socialist to comment on my election last year and my political future. In the middle of the article was a picture purporting to be the Conservative Member of Parliament for Basildon. I looked closely at the picture and found that it certainly did not resemble myself. It turned out to be the Liberal parliamentary candidate. So the scandal goes on. I hope that the television companies will allow me to have a half-hour slot in which I can broadcast to the nation about all the good things that have happened in Basildon since the general election and the local elections last year.

Until 11 May last year, I had to come to the House each year to talk about the capping measures and to criticise the awful, rotten socialist council that we had to put up with in Basildon. That socialist council was a disgrace and the Labour Front-Bench team knew it. Labour spokesmen and women, by sleight of hand, tried to distance themselves from that council.

Mr. Tony Banks: No.

Mr. Amess: The only thing that the socialists knew how to do in Basildon was to spend money. They cruelly deceived people into believing that they could provide services at no cost whatever to the local taxpayer.

Mr. Banks: No.

Mr. Amess: I shall deal with Newham in a moment, if the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will contain himself.

It has been left to the Conservative council elected on 11 May last year to cope with the legacy of the socialist council. In that election, 15 Conservatives stood and 15 were elected. Every socialist was defeated because the residents of the district wanted a change. Why did they want a change? It was because the local socialists were hostile to private sector involvement in local government.

To the socialists in Basildon, the very word "profit" was a dirty word. One could not possibly make a profit. Everything had to be done by collecting local and national taxes. That is why we had the highest community charge in the country. Our standard spending assessment was 198 per cent. above the rest of the country. For those reasons, every year I had to come to the House during the one-and-a-half or three-hour debate to speak about the capping orders until the events of 11 May last year when local residents voted for a change.

The legacy that has been handed to the Conservatives is a local and national scandal. A large sum of money was borrowed. Now local residents are having to pay back that money at ridiculous charges, presumably because incompetent advice was given to councillors by certain individuals.

The socialists talked only about Basildon. The council that I represent is shared with my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). It was not only Basildon council: it covered Billericay, Wickford and Basildon. But the socialists' mentality disfranchised everyone in my hon. Friend's constituency because those people had money. So the socialists talked only about Basildon. Even the council logo, such as it was, never mentioned Billericay and Wickford. That is why I am delighted to tell the House that the nuclear-free zone signs in Basildon have been taken down. Of course, my defeated Labour opponent is such a bad loser that he has spent the past year trying to take out a prosecution—

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Can my hon. Friend assure the House that his constituents do not feel any less safe for not having those signs?

Mr. Amess: My hon. Friend knows only too well that, when the signs were erected, it was said that the Labour leader of the council telephoned Mikhail Gorbachev and asked, "In the event of a nuclear conflict, can you ensure that the raid avoids Basildon?" It is ridiculous. It is insulting that one of the signs was placed outside GEC Avionics, which employs 2,800 men and women who are trying to defend our country.

My bitter, defeated Labour opponent has wasted local and national taxpayers' money trying to take out a prosecution against me and Conservative councillors

because we had the cheek to take down the signs. He tried to persuade the local police that we had stolen them. I do not know where we were supposed to have hidden them, but he went to the police and accused us of theft. The police asked the council whether the signs had been stolen, and the council said that they had not. Yet my opponent insisted that the matter be referred to the Crown prosecution service. That has cost a huge amount of money and wasted the time of both the police and the CPS.

Never let me again hear a socialist in Basildon talking about law and order and about having more police on the streets. My bitter, defeated Labour opponent wasted time and money in the most extraordinary way.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the former Greater London council declared London a nuclear-free zone, and that three months later the Gallup poll in *The Daily Telegraph* showed that 54 per cent. of Conservative voters in London thought it a good idea? Does he think that they were secret lefties, or were they people whom he would not want in the Tory party?

Mr. Amess: I assume that that must have been the same Gallup poll that last year predicted that I would lose my seat and that the socialists would form the next Government. At that time, I was living in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, but I did not feel any safer by having the nuclear-free zone signs.

Mr. Denham: On the point about wasting public resources on police investigations, will the hon. Gentleman extend his remarks to cover the costs of the spurious allegations about election expenses made by my defeated Conservative opponent, but which led to no police prosecution? They did, however, lead to the prosecution of the Conservative agent for fraud.

Mr. Amess: I would not wish to intrude on private grief in Itchen. However, I know Christopher Chope extremely well and I should be very surprised if he behaved in an ungallant way towards the person who defeated him in the general election.

I am delighted that this week in Basildon we have unveiled new signs. They signal a new era—a partnership in local government between the private and public sectors. The signs say "Welcome to Basildon" and they have been placed on the A127 and the A13. Above them is the new council logo, which incorporates the districts of Laindon, Wickford, Billericay and Basildon.

Unlike the awful former socialist council, we welcome the private sector in Basildon. That is why yesterday, in the House, we launched the "buy competitive British goods from Basildon campaign". Basildon district council and Conservative-controlled Essex county council will together encourage business men and women to invest in the area, so that goods and services may be traded together in partnership.

The only employment that Basildon socialists understood was district council employment. That is what they thought jobs were all about. The former socialist Basildon district council employed 1,200 people—not to give advice on housing or to ensure that pavements were level so that elderly ladies did not trip over or that lamp posts were properly lit, but to guarantee that socialist propaganda was put out every day, every week and every month.

The socialists' message was crude—"Aren't the Conservatives awful? They are to blame for everything. Aren't the socialists marvellous?" On 11 May last year, the socialists had their answer. That is why an historic and wonderful change occurred.

Of course the past year has been difficult. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) mentioned the traditional position in respect of local government officers. I know only too well from my days as a Redbridge councillor how professional were that council's officers. I was horrified when it came to my attention that the former socialist Basildon district council would on occasion appoint only officers who pledged themselves to supporting their fellow brothers and sisters. Those people spent all their time, while being paid by myself and other rates and community charge payers, putting out their vile and vicious propaganda.

When the Conservatives took over on 11 May last year, obscene telephone calls were made to Conservative councillors, which was an absolute disgrace. Somehow, my own private telephone number was given out to some lady council officers. The telephone would ring at 10 pm, 11 pm, 1 am or 3 am. My wife and small children were not greatly amused by those telephone calls from people—who seemed to have had a little too much to drink—arguing about the awful Conservative council and the fact that they might lose their jobs.

Officers who said publicly beforehand that they would never again work under a Conservative-controlled council or a Conservative Government should behave honourably, examine their consciences, and decide whether they are right to remain local authority employees.

I pay tribute to the wonderful job that the Conservative council is doing in very difficult circumstances. Typical of the misreporting that has occurred is the case of the Town Gate theatre. That project's builders took it to 13 other local authorities, which all said no. In this day and age, who would think that a council could somehow find the money to build a huge theatre? As we all know, a theatre is used not just by local residents but is a regional facility.

There was no money to sustain the theatre—it was all borrowed. The interest charges to service the debt amount to £1·5 million a year. However, I am delighted to tell my hon. Friends the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who have both been to Basildon, that the council is now in serious negotiations with an interested party and hopes to make an announcement about the theatre.

Huge amounts of money were borrowed to meet the costs of sports and leisure facilities. Such projects would have been better realised in partnership with the private sector.

It has been misreported that there have been local authority by-elections in Basildon that the Conservative party has lost. That is untrue. There was one by-election two weeks ago, when a socialist councillor resigned, left the country and ended up in New Zealand. It is true that the socialists retained their seats, but what did not receive publicity was the fact that the Conservatives moved up from third to second place.

On the same day as the county council elections, there is a district council by-election, caused not by a Conservative throwing in the towel, but by another socialist doing so because, believe it or not, he says that he is too busy working for a housing association—although

[Mr. Amess]

we all know that socialists are supposed to oppose housing associations. Not one Conservative councillor has thrown in the towel, but two socialist councillors have already done so.

I pay tribute to the work that the new Conservative council is now doing. The leader of the council has announced that from now all services will be tested in the market because we owe it to people to provide high quality services at a competitive price. As a result, in years to come, when people outside the House report on political matters, I trust that they will be able to state that the new Conservative-controlled Basildon district council has led the country in a successful and beneficial partnership between the public and private sectors.

1.22 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): The debate has been interesting, if only because we now know that the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) has not put his telephone number in the telephone directory as I assume that the rest of us have done so that our constituents can ring us up without having to hunt to find the number.

The debate has, in many ways, been bizarre as the Government have set out their agenda in the belief that the central issue in the provision of local government services is the extent to which those services are privatised. The Government are following an agenda which, although it has important elements, does not include the central issue in the provision of local services by local, democratically controlled councils.

The myth has been constructed—although it has been shot down many times by Opposition contributions—that the idea of partnership between local government and the private sector is opposed and resisted by and alien to Labour local authorities. That is not true. Looking around my constituency, one sees a wide range of appropriate partnerships operating between Southampton city council and the city of Southampton. The waterfront has been opened up, and the town quay and Ocean Village have been created. That scheme involved co-operation between the private and public sector; private housing and commercial development have been carried out by the private sector, and social housing has been provided by the council with the housing associations.

The regional film theatre is to be provided by the council, the private sector and other public bodies. An agreement will soon be signed by a private sector company for a new development with an ice rink and a swimming pool. The finest art gallery outside London, certainly in the south-east of England, has been refurbished as a result of a public sector partnership between the city council and the county council as it is not a profit-making exercise. Partnerships with housing associations and in some cases with private developers have meant that in the past year some projects that I set in train as chair of the housing committee will result in the creation of 250 new family homes.

Those are just a few examples. Since 1985, Southampton Labour council has been acting in a way that is far more typical of the far-sighted and forward-looking role of local authorities than the myths produced by Conservative Members today. The council chooses whether it is more appropriate for the private sector or the public sector to provide a service. The one issue that strongly divides us is the idea that wage cutting should be a basic element in the approach to the delivery of local government services. When I was the chair of housing in Southampton, I was pleased that the vast majority of building maintenance work in council housing was won by the in-house bid, but I was not pleased with the fact that for skilled tradesmen in those services it was likely to lead to a loss in income and benefits worth about £1,500 a year in order to retain their jobs.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who spoke earlier in the debate, came along with a walletful of consultancies. No doubt he believes that his reward for those consultancies is the right to reduce the income of craftsmen who work for Southampton city council by £1,500 a year. Some of us believe—this may be a fundamental divide—that a moral issue is involved: that it is not moral to drive down the level of wages to whatever can be undercut by the private sector. That aside, it is clear that Labour-controlled councils work well in partnership with the private sector.

I said at the outset, however, that I do not regard that as the fundamental issue when it comes to the provision of local government services. The consumers of those services do not care very much who provides the services. They care about the quality of the services provided. They also care about whether they have access to those services when they need them. The one issue that has not been mentioned by any Conservative Member is what sort of services people get and whether they can get access to them.

A ridiculous and ludicrous situation is developing, in which an elderly lady who goes to her local social services department to find out whether she can have the services of a home carer now finds that performance marks are set down as to how long she will have to wait before she is interviewed, how quickly her letter should be answered and how soon the interview should take place, but that no standards at all are set as to whether she should obtain the services of a home carer.

As for real access to services, we find that there are enormous differences when it comes to the provision of services by local authorities throughout the country. For convenience, I have chosen to compare the performance of the bleak coastland strip of southern England from Dorset to Kent—solidly Conservative controlled—with the Labour-controlled shire counties. What a remarkable picture it presents. We must assume that in those Tory-controlled authorities the Tory philosophy that we have heard about this morning is being pursued to its fullest extent, that the full economic benefit of that approach has been gained and that better services are provided. In fact, that is not so.

It is not that there are huge differences in need between the north and the south. Unemployment is marginally higher in the north, though not greatly. Income is somewhat lower in the Labour-controlled shire counties and there are more people on low incomes in the Labour-controlled shire counties. However, when one allows for the cost of living, which is generally higher in the south, the differences are not so great. Yet despite the similarities between those areas there are enormous differences in the spread and availability of services.

Let us take, for example, a basic grassroots service—the availability of home carers for the elderly. We find that in that bleak grey Tory coastland of southern England there are eight hours of home carer time per 1,000 elderly

people per week, compared with 14·3 hours of home carer time per 1,000 elderly people per week in the Labour-controlled shire counties. Only 4 per cent. of pensioners in those Tory-controlled southern counties have any access to a home carer, while 10 per cent. in Labour-controlled local authorities have access to a home carer.

Mr. Carrington: In the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham in which my constituency is situated—a Labour-controlled council—the council has a policy that denies access to sheltered housing to elderly people, no matter how poor and with no matter how little equity, solely on the ground that they live in their own accommodation and are owner-occupiers. Does the hon. Gentleman think that that is the right policy for that council to pursue?

Mr. Denham: I would not presume to comment on an allegation made about a local authority of which I have no knowledge. I have given a straightforward comparison —like for like—between local authorities with similar numbers of elderly people. Some are Conservative controlled and some are Labour controlled. On that straightforward comparison, elderly people in Labour-controlled shire councils have more than twice the chance of receiving home carer support to enable them to live in their own homes than they have under Tory councils.

If the Government believe that they have the key to the delivery of local government services, those figures need to be explained. They are simply explained by saying that Labour councils care a good deal more about elderly people in their areas, which is also reflected in more economic comparisons. Figures that I was able to obtain 18 months or two years ago show that the price of meals on wheels in those Tory southern heartland councils was £1·36 and in the Labour-controlled shire councils it was 89p. The burden then falls heavily on Labour-controlled district councils such as Southampton, to compensate for the neglect and incompetence of Tory county councils, to reduce the price of meals on wheels.

I have been able to find no significant difference in the needs of mobility and accessibility between people living in the Labour-controlled shire counties and those on the southern Tory strip. Yet in Labour-controlled authorities the average per capita support for public transport is £3·54 per head, while in the Tory-controlled area it is £2 per head. That is an example of public sector and private sector integration. Bus deregulation is now not a matter of looking after one's own bus service, but a matter of how much the public sector puts in to provide a decent transport system. There is far more commitment to public transport and mobility in Labour-controlled areas. That means that there are more buses and people are better able to travel and get around.

Another area where it is easy to measure need is the provision of nursery education. In the child neglect capital of the south, 5 per cent. of under-fives are in nursery education, but in Labour-controlled shire counties 35 per cent. are in nursery schools or nursery classes. What is the explanation for that appalling neglect of young children and their education in the Tory south of England? It has nothing to do with arguments about ideologies and public and private sector partnership. As the Minister said earlier, the Government determine the level of service. On service after service, Tory local councils offer a poor level of service and few young children and elderly people have access to a decent service. That issue is much more important than which local authority services are privatised.

I can find no evidence of the apparent savings from privatisation being fed back into the system. One would have expected that the authorities that have done the most to privatise would have fed the money back into extending services to more people who need them, but there is no evidence of that.

I am the first to accept that pupil-teacher ratios are not an accurate estimate of educational value—and neither is testing. The only question is value added in education. The Government provide no measure of value added in education, but the pupil-teacher ratio is better in the Labour-controlled shires than in the south.

I could go through many other issues, but I will not do so as I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. The point is clear, however: it is not sufficient to have an in-principle ideological discussion about the extent of privatisation of local government services. The only question that matters to people outside is whether they will have access to the service that they need and whether it will be well provided. All the evidence shows that the answer is more likley to be no in a Tory-run county than in a Labour-run county. That is what the May elections will be all about.

1.33 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I have listened with some interest to the hon. Members for Lancshire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham). The hon. Member for Itchen talked about poor levels of service. One of the services that the parents, children and charge payers expect of a local authority is the provision of a decent and successful education. The hon. Gentleman could have told the House which local authorities produce good A-level results and which produce poor results. I was interested to hear that he objected to the fact that the Government do not produce tables of value added in education. However, they produce tables of school results, but the hon. Gentleman did not show much enthusiasm.

Mr. Denham: There is a great difference between the results of testing, which have built into them influences such as social class and parental income, and value added, which measures the extent to which a child gains from school. A-level results and results of other testing, which do not take value added into account, are very misleading.

Mr. Marshall: Parents want good GCSE and A-level results for their children because they provide the opportunity for their children to enter further, higher and university education. It is noticeable that the local authorities that produce good results are Conservative councils and those that produce bad results are Labour councils.

It is no use the hon. Gentleman saying that one local authority spends more than another on education, because we all know which local education authority spent more than any other; the late and unlamented Inner London education authority spent a great deal, but produced some of the worst examination results. It did not care a tinker's cuss for standards, allowed schools such as Highbury

[Mr. Marshall]

Grove school in Islington to go downhill, and forgot that parents sent children to school so that they could go on to higher and university education.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West talked about the Government reducing local authorities' democratic control. The Conservative party should take no lessons from the Labour party. It was a Labour Government who imposed on local authorities the obligation to destroy grammar schools, regardless of the wishes of parents and teachers and of the standards achieved in those schools. Under the Shirley Williams Act, there were no parental ballots on getting rid of grammar schools; it was done by diktat of the Labour Government. The reason why there are still some grammar schools is that some courageous Conservative councillors were willing to cause delays because they knew that Baroness Thatcher would give them the freedom to retain those centres of educational excellence.

How dare a Labour Member talk about democratic control when the previous Labour Government restricted the right of local authorities to sell council houses? How can a Labour Member talk about creating greater economic activity when the Labour party is committed to reintroducing a Greater London council? The GLC was guilty of waste, extravagance, duplication and delay.

When the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was leader of the GLC, the disagreement between it and the borough councils destroyed tens of thousands of jobs in London. When he was in control of the GLC, I was a local councillor in Ealing. My council applied to the GLC for permission to create a pedestrian crossing. It took the GLC 13 months to give us the permission and took us 13 days to create the crossing. No one should say that the GLC, or the son of GLC, would generate economic activity; it would generate only delay, waste and extravagance in London.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West also spoke about the desirability of tendering but said that compulsory competitive tendering was wrong. That is absurd, because we all know what happened in the days before CCT. It was sometimes difficult to get Conservative councils to go out to tender and it was impossible to get Labour councils to go out to tender. Does the hon. Member for Lancashire, West believe that if there were no compulsory competitive tendering the good people of Haringey would go out to tender, that Camden council would go out to tender or that Islington council, of which you were once a distinguished member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would go out to tender? Of course they would not. Competitive tendering is anathema to the socialists of those councils which just do not believe in it.

It is true that under CCT the hours that people work have sometimes been cut. Let us consider what happened before CCT. When I was chairman of the local services committee in Ealing, I went round to look at people at work. From midday onwards, although the workers knew that we were coming, we could not find them. The excuse given was that they must have gone on to the next job. If they had gone on to the next job, I suspect that it was being done in the private sector rather than in the local authority sector because we could not find them. We all know what happened. One did not see a refuse collector in London after midday before compulsory competitive tendering. There is no doubt that people were paid for a 38-hour week, but they certainly were not working one before CCT.

There has been a sea change in the attitude of local authorities to the private sector. In the 1960s and early 1970s, local authorities would say that they believed in the private sector, as shown by the fact that they rented out a kiosk in the park or on the beach in the summer. Local authorities were quite unwilling to do anything to generate savings through competitive tendering in their major activities. They always claimed that there could be no improvement in the quality of service. It was claimed by council after council that there could be no savings.

I heard, as I am sure the Minister heard, the odd Conservative councillor in the 1970s say, "We are not putting that out to tender because we shall not save any money." That is the arrogance of monopolies throughout the ages. It was believed that, because a particular service had been run in a particular way by a certain council for 20 years, there was no scope for providing a better service or a more economic service. Events have proved those absurd claims to be false.

I pay tribute first to Wandsworth council, the local authority in London which did most to popularise competitive tendering. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), because in his business career before he came to the House he was one of those who showed up the incompetence of direct labour organisations and the benefits that could come from compulsory competitive tendering. I also pay tribute to the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, because she was the national politician who did most to popularise competitive tendering and to point out that socialism did not work in the town hall, just as it did not work nationally or internationally.

All my experiences in local government in Aberdeen and in Ealing suggest that competitive tendering is the only way to get a decent service. I discovered that early on when I was a member of Aberdeen council and we managed to get a motion through our watch committee saying that we should go out to tender for a demolition job. We did so, having been told by Labour members on the council that we were wasting our time and that there would be no saving. When the tenders came in, we realised that the lowest tender, from an outside contractor, would lead to a saving of 40 per cent. What did Labour members of the city council do? Did they say, "Well done, we shall take that cheaper contract"? Of course they did not. They voted for the higher contract. As an Aberdeen ratepayer, I wrote to the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Willie Ross. I am glad to say that he wrote back saying that he had instructed the council to accept the lowest tender, showing that there were some sensible socialists even in those days.

I later became chairman of the finance committee in Ealing. We had two boasts in Ealing: that we had the lowest rates in west London, and that the quality of our services persuaded the then Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), to leave Liberal Richmond and to come to live in Conservative Ealing. We discovered that, whenever we went out to tender, there were dramatic savings to be made to the benefit of ratepayers. Compulsory competitive tendering has resulted in a huge reduction in costs. All the surveys show that, because of CCT, local government services are less expensive in real terms than they were five, six or seven years ago.

Moreover, a much better service is being provided for the benefit of charge payers. Penalty clauses are always attached when a service goes out to tender so that if the service is not carried out, the contractor does not get the money. Under the previous system, the direct labour department did not always deliver the goods or collect the refuse, but it still got paid. The refuse collector was paid however good or however poor the job he did and, all too often, the job was second rate. Private contractors are also more alert to the possibilities of using a facility for the benefit of individuals than the old local authority manager was.

I welcome some of the developments that have taken place in recent months. In Berkshire—a county which some of us may get to know somewhat better in the weeks to 6 May—compulsory competitive tendering is about to save ratepayers £1·3 million as a result of a £30 million deal that the authority has done with Baptis, the Glasgow civil engineering company. The Government have recognised that the most efficient way of providing gipsy sites is through private enterprise rather than through the public sector. I warmly welcome that and I also welcome the fact that the Government have recognised the validity of the claim that I have been making for a long time—that boroughs such as Barnet should not be compelled by Government diktat to provide a gipsy site. There is nowhere in the London borough of Barnet suitable for a gipsy site.

We have seen advice from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy—a completely unbiased body—that private contractors are now obtaining a much higher percentage of new contracts. Some 68 per cent. of the local authority contracts going out to tender now go to private contractors rather than the direct labour department. Throughout the world, people are recognising that privatisation and competitive tendering are the real engines of economic progress. It is a great tragedy that there is one place in the world where that has not yet come home, and that is on the Labour Benches.

It is because of the different attitudes of political parties to private enterprise, standards and quality of service that there is such a discrepancy between the council tax in band G, at the higher end of the scale, in the London borough of Barnet, where it is £915, and in the London borough of Haringey, just over the road, where it is £1,211—nearly £300, or 30 per cent., more. Yet in the London borough of Barnet services are very much better because the council believes in co-operation with the private sector. In Brent Cross, it can boast the most modern shopping centre in London. It was developed in the 1970s by local government and the private sector in co-operation and, because it is managed by the private sector, it is popular, successful and profitable—three categories of service which the Labour party has never yet understood.

1.48 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Alhough I have been here since 9.30, I am sure that it will come as a relief to some hon. Members to learn that I propose to limit my remarks to 10 minutes so as to allow other hon. Members the opportunity to speak.

I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) said about the damage that has been done to the relationship between local authorities and the private sector, and between local authorities and the Government, as a result of the almost irrational and certainly ideologically rooted hostility on the Conservative Benches towards local authorities and public sector undertakings in particular. The comments of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) were as clear an example of that as one could possibly imagine.

It is almost like the Orwellian image of "public sector bad, private sector good", as though the Conservative Benches are staffed by pigs that have finally learnt to walk on their hind legs. The reality of co-operation between local authorities and the private sector—and the Government, as the debate relates to co-operation between the public and private sectors, and the relationship with the Government is a very important part of that—is as old as local authorities themselves.

The role of local authorities as contractors dates back many years. The introduction of a degree of compulsion, obsessively driven by the Conservative party in recent years, is merely another development of that. If that had been introduced in an even-handed and reasonable way, such great damage would not have been caused to local authorities. It was introduced with just one purpose in mind: to take services out of the control of local authorities. The idea was not to improve the level of service and value for money, but to remove the services from local authority control.

If we need evidence of that, we need only consider the comments of the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), who recounted a list of the services that the London borough of Bromley had put out to the private sector. He wore that list as a badge of pride, but he did not reflect on the quality of those services. He did not say whether they were good, bad or indifferent. He believed that getting services out to the private sector was a good in and of itself. I believe that that serves the people of Bromley particularly badly. As I said to the hon. Member in an intervention, because of that ideologically blinded and dogmatic approach, the fraud squad has taken a deep interest in some of the manoeuvrings—I put it no higher than that—of elected Tory councillors in Bromley in attempting to discharge themselves of their responsibilities with regard to the provision of social services homes.

I wish to refer briefly to Lewisham, which is next door to Bromley. Lewisham is an inner London borough—unlike leafy Bromley, which is the richest local authority in Britain with the highest per capita income of any local authority. We to the north in Lewisham are not so fortunate, having a similar population in about one third of the area in which Bromley luxuriates. Bromley truly is a leafy suburb. I wish to make my position perfectly clear. Having been a member of Lewisham council for 19 years, I am not entirely objective in my assessment of what has happened in those years, but I believe that what I say will stand up to examination.

When the Institute of Local Government reviewed well-managed local authorities recently—I am sure that the Minister and his Department have a copy of the report—it identified Lewisham as the only London borough worthy of inclusion in the top 16 well-managed authorities. In fact, Lewisham was one of the top six well-managed authorities in Britain. In part, that is probably why in recent years the Labour majority in Lewisham has been higher than it has ever been. Lewisham council has the largest Labour group in London. We also have the largest political group of any kind. Conservative

[Mr. Jim Dowd]

representation is down to a mere half dozen, and I believe that the borough council elections next year could erode that even further.

I look on that with one joyful eye and one tearful eye. I suppose that I am a "Pymist" in these matters. I believe that local authorities need a degree of balance. All democratic institutions require that balance. The fear of losing office keeps our politicians straight—or straightish, shall we say. I believe that what we are trying to do in political terms is often best examined through the eyes of those who do not agree with us. While we may never convert them, if we can at least substantiate in our own minds the validity of what we are doing, I believe that we are at least discharging our responsibilities properly.

Lewisham is committed to a lead role in urban regeneration in the borough and the partnership includes other public sector bodies, voluntary bodies and private sector interests. In an intervention in the speech by the hon. Member for Beckenham I mentioned one of those projects—Beckenham Place park. I accept that the issue is highly controversial, but there are many such issues to be resolved and I appreciate the strength of feeling in the area. The scheme was undertaken in the full knowledge that Lewisham council was obliged to secure the future of that park but did not have the resources to do so on its own. The expenditure over the coming years is immense and the only way to protect that valuable public asset was through a partnership with a private sector organisation. Whether that is the right path and whether the scheme will make progress remains to be seen, but the partnership with the private organisation was a responsible and reasonable action by the local authority.

Unfortunately, the partnership approach is undermined by the proliferation of central Government and arm's-length agencies. Inner London probably has more of those than any other area of the country. Their remit is prescribed by the Government irrespective of the needs of the locality, and that is a cause for concern. There is an apparent lack of central co-ordination of initiatives, which results in both gaps and overlaps between the agencies. That is also perceived as part of the attack on local democracy and the increasing centralisation of power about which my hon. Friends have spoken in detail.

Lewisham council, with its extensive knowledge of the economic, social and environmental profile and the needs and opportunities in its area, is the only body with the legitimacy to determine those priorities, co-ordinate the work of the agencies and decide how best to augment services and quality of life for people in the area. The plethora of initiatives for distinct topical issues such as community safety, employment and enterprise development in the borough and their high public profile could lead one to believe that they are the sum total of urban regeneration in the borough, but, in fact, they reflect just a small part of it.

I could go into detail about what is being attempted in Lewisham town centre, which is one of London's major regional and strategic centres. To a large extent, its future has been assured, despite the recession, largely due to the council's decision to dispose of its freeholding of the centre and go into partnership with a private company to secure the future of that centre. That raised a considerable amount of money which the council was able to redeploy through a sharp—and, I hasten to add, highly legal—manoeuvre. I use the word "sharp" in its prudent sense. We were able to build a new town hall on a site acquired in the mid-1960s for precisely that purpose. The net result is that without costing the poll tax payers of Lewisham a penny they are now saving £2 million in revenue because of the savings from rents and other costs that we do not need to pay for expensive office space. Even in an unfashionable corner of London such as Lewisham, office accommodation is extremely expensive.

We achieved much through Deptford city challenge, although city challenge is a double-edged sword. Lewisham was one of the pacemaker authorities in city challenge and one of only two authorities in London to secure the first wave partnership. It was not said then that that expenditure was instead of urban programme money—it was always trailed as being additional. Unfortunately, we are now losing out because all Lewisham's urban partnership bids have been lost. That is not supporting the partnership in the way that the local authority has a right to expect. In the first year, Deptford city challenge is over-programmed by about £300,000. We were originally told by the Minister's Department that that would be met from underspend in other city challenge enterprises, but we have now been told that the money will be taken from year five—if the city challenge programme reaches year five.

The local authority in Lewisham is undertaking many other aspects of development into which I will not go because of the time. It is not simply a question of deciding who does what. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, it is a question of seeing who does what best. That mixture is critical in providing value for money and the quality of life that all citizens in all local authority areas have every right to expect.

1.59 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Underlining this morning's debate is a question about the fundamental role of local authorities—whether they should be enablers or providers of services. What is clearly emerging is that local authorities should be enablers of services because only then can they make sure that the quality, the value for money and the level of services given buy the providers reach what is deemed and needed by people living in their areas.

It is essential that local authorities recognise that their primary purpose is to ensure that the money that they get in, both from council tax payers and from central Government, is spent in the most effective manner, to provide the highest quality of service in the way required by those who live in the area. There is a fundamental contradiction, in that if councils provide services themselves, their ability to demand quality of that service is severely eroded. I should like to see compulsory competitive tendering moving the next stage forward—from some services to all services being contracted out—and the removal from councils of the power to provide any services, leaving them only with the power to commission services from outside bodies. Unless councils do that, they cannot demand the necessary quality and level of services, or get the value for money, that they require.

In many areas, we are moving towards a requirement that local authorities contract out. In many sectors, that contracting out could go one stage further. We are starting

to see that happen in, for example, the accountancy function, which is a natural sector for which local authorities can buy in outside expertise and thereby give a higher quality of service. There are many other sectors.

The fact that what we are looking at is the level of services that local authorities provide and the level at which they do compulsory competitive tendering should not blind us to the great weakness of the present system. Some local authorities so skew the tendering process that they ensure that any realistic outside provider of services cannot conceivably comply with the contract conditions that they insist on setting.

Let me give at least one example—I could give many more, but time is short—from the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, in which my constituency is situated. When it gave out the contract details for providing school meals within the education service, the specification for the quality of food was admirably, but also unreasonably, high. It defined such detail as the thickness of the skin of the lemons that were to be provided by the catering service and set out the criterion that the bananas to be provided were to have no brown marks on them. I dare say that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, regularly shop for bananas, as all of us do, and will recognise how difficult it is to purchase bananas that have no brown marks on their skin. Needless to say, no private contractors have felt able to meet the requirements of the contract conditions. Needless to say also, the in-house tender from the council won the contract.

That raises the next question, which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will already be asking as you are well ahead of me in the argument: how does the in-house council contractor meet the stringent conditions? The answer is that no one knows, because no one checks. The council would make detailed checks of any outside contractor's performance of his contract conditions, but, if it were checking its own work force to see whether it was complying with contract conditions, the tendency would be to be a little more tolerant and to consider that there are certain matters that need a certain time—six months, a year, two years, until the next election, perhaps well beyond it—to put right. So conditions will not be so toughly enforced for the in-house service. That also leads to fraud and corruption.

There are severe question marks over what is going on in the engineering and borough highways departments of Hammersmith and Fulham council. It may or may not be fraud. The departments are certainly loss making. But the council's toleration of a department making severe losses in providing services is much greater than it would be if an outside contractor said that it wanted to increase the price of the contract because it was making losses in providing the service.

When a council attempts to provide services and police them, it faces a conflict of interest which it is impossible to resolve. The only way round that conflict of interest is to make councils contract out all services. That cannot happen immediately because the private sector cannot provide those services immediately. However, in time it will be possible to provide those services. I hope that the Government and, in particular, my hon. Friend the Minister will look hard at encouraging and forcing councils to contract out more services. That is the only way in which, in time, we shall achieve a better, higher quality local government service.

2.6 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As I may be the last Member to speak before the Front-Bench replies, I remind the House of the subject of today's debate: the partnership between the public and private sectors in delivering local government services. All the speeches that we have heard from the Conservative Benches have stressed not the need for partnership between the public and private sector but the notion that the private sector should take over from the public sector. Conservative Members said that enabling authorities should allow private bodies to operate in local areas. They said that compulsory competitive tendering should be used to push more services into private provision. They said that the boundaries of public provision should be pushed back even further.

There is a different approach, however. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) discussed developments in partnership between public and private sectors, but that has been missed by Conservative Members and particularly by the Minister, who gave us an ideological tour when he introduced the debate, stressing special examples of what was important about private provision and giving us all the pluses in the development of 19th and 20th century capitalism. The Minister spoke about the development of the railways and said how important that private development was. However, it was all one-sided. He told us what had been achieved by capitalism but nothing about the problems that had been created. The vast problems of exploitation, deprivation and unemployment had to be handled by the public sector, which had to come in to correct what unrestrained private enterprise had done. The Government's arguments push us all the time towards unrestrained private sector activity in which the role of local councillors is limited. Their role is not to be involved in the running of services or in co-operating with the private sector.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman heard only half of my speech. I made it clear that there was a vital role for local and central government. I made it clear that some people need protecting. They need services and help from the Government against the background of market capitalism. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would recognise that there was balance in my speech. I identified the role of both the government and the private sector.

Mr. Barnes: I listened to all of the speeches from the Conservative Benches, including that of the Minister. Apart from a discussion about bananas and Basildon, all the stress was placed on the importance of the private sector coming into local government. Thatcherism has produced the notion that anything can be privatised because public money will be made available for private services in what was previously the public sphere.

Indeed, the importance of such markets is stressed continuously by Conservative Members—except when it comes to the markets in ideas, discussions and arguments with the electorate, which are pushed to one side. In the argument about the opting out of schools, local authorities, trade unions and others are constrained in what they can say because otherwise it is held to be misleading information. The Government want to put only one side of the argument when people are making up their minds.

[Mr. Barnes]

The stress on the private replacing the public is wrong. Public services were introduced to correct the results of unrestrained private enterprise. That even happened under the Tory party with education legislation in the 19th century. Old age pensions were introduced by the then Liberal party early in this century, and the welfare state was introduced by the Labour party. None of that was done with the aim of entirely changing the basis of society or doing away with markets; it was done because it was recognised that other elements had to be included and that there had to be a measure of public responsibility.

There is considerable scope for public provision supplementing private provision. There is a problem with dioxin at Stanton plc in the Staveley area of my constituency—it spills over from the problem in Bolsover. We need a public body, perhaps an environmental protection agency, to draw together all the different threads and to assist the company from which we assume the dioxin comes. There needs also to be assistance for the farmers in the area whose future prospects have been threatened. There are plenty of opportunities for the public sector to work with the private sector to ensure the protection both of jobs and of the community.

The whole notion of civic service, civic duty and civic pride has been hit hard by a mass of Government legislation. We had reached the stage where we almost believed that the Government could not go any further in hammering local authorities. They introduced the poll tax, which was the unfairest tax system ever introduced into a western democratic system. They introduced the nonsense of standard spending assessments, which are still in operation. We thought that that was the end of the road in terms of what the Government could do to local authorities and many of us began to wonder about the role of authorities, which basically were becoming agents carrying out policies determined by central Government, but now it seems that we are to go even further down that road with the notion of enabling authorities.

In Derbyshire, there has been an examination of local authority boundaries, areas and functions, and much of the discussion has centred on what the boundaries should be. The really important discussion, however, is whether local authorities will become just enabling authorities and local councillors will have less and less input into decisions about their areas and thus become less accountable to their electorate. We should be talking about extending democratic provision. Where there are shortcomings in the work of councils, we should insist on improving the democratic arrangements so that people are drawn into the work of the local authority and can influence its decisions. It should not be a matter of the private sector coming into authorities to correct any problems.

I want to deal with the problems being faced in Derbyshire and the terrible system of standard spending assessments. Since that system was introduced, Derbyshire county council has received smaller increases to compensate for inflation than any other shire county. It has received only 60 per cent. of the provision for Berkshire or Hertfordshire. The Minister argues that the reason is that Derbyshire's population has declined while Hertfordshire's has increased, but that is incorrect. Derbyshire's population has grown by a larger percentage than Hertfordshire's over the last two or three years and bigger increases are projected. The authorities in my constituency—including Chesterfield borough council and North-East Derbyshire district council—are at the bottom end of standard spending assessment and grant provision. There is no reason for that. North-East Derbyshire is 365th out of the 366 district councils in England and Wales.

We know the system is fiddled and we want it altered. It is nonsense to go on as we are when provision needs to be made for that area. No one could describe the authorities concerned as profligate, but they are seriously hit by the present arrangements. Councils in some areas receive two or three times more in standard spending assessment and grant than does Derbyshire. How is any authority expected to manage in those circumstances?

2.16 pm

Mr. Henderson: With the leave of the House, I will comment on some of the arguments made in this interesting debate on a number of important issues affecting communities throughout the country. It is understandable that some hon. Members have had to leave early, and I thank those who informed me that they could not stay for the end of the debate.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) fell short of convincing the House that he was objective in his assessment of the delivery of local authority services. If he had paid more attention to the old axiom that people who live in glasshouses should not throw stones, he might have convinced the House of his objectivity. He missed the whole point about local authority services by not paying any attention to the views of communities that are dependent on them.

The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) also fell into that trap, believing that compulsory competitive tendering could solve all the problems of delivering local authority services when it is clear that even the Audit Commission does not acknowledge that point. Its recent report indicated that some costs increased when compulsory competitive tendering was introduced. If I had more time, I might be tempted to give more details.

I contrast those hon. Gentlemen's remarks with those of my hon. Friends the Members for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) and for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), who have no objection to the delivery of various local government services but want to see even-handedness, quality being brought to the fore, and efficiency improvements not being made at the expense of exploiting many workers who are already low paid.

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) attempted to admit that ideology had sometimes played more of a part in the argument than might be wise. That was demonstrated in the speech of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), and even more so in that of the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) emphasised the damage done to democracy by the establishment of unelected quangos operating in areas affecting local authorities. The hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) recounted sitting on his grandfather's knee. He tried to persuade us that he was a generous character who could have appeared in a Hovis commercial, but he only convinced us that he had already played a part in "All Muck and Brass". Certainly the

conciliatory approach that the Minister sometimes attempted to adopt was completely missed by his hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough.

In their excellent speeches, my hon. Friends the Members for York (Mr. Bayley) and for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) gave prominence to people's choice. The key question in the delivery of local government services is: are people being given the chance to receive what they want at the price that they are prepared to pay? The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that compulsory capping had often intervened to prevent that.

My argument with the Government is that they tried to use the delivery mechanism as a smokescreen to avoid real debate about the other local government issues. There is no major disagreement on delivery mechanism between the various political parties that have participated in the debate. We all recognise that, in our economy, partnership is crucial in the development of local government services.

Tendering has always taken place and local authorities up and down the country have for many years been involved in tendering services where they believe that they can be better provided on a contracted-out basis than a direct basis. There is every suggestion that that will continue to be so. On a number of occasions, Opposition Members said that tendering itself does not guarantee an improvement in efficiency. I said that good management, whether of direct provision or contracting out, was important for local authorities.

The real issue concerns democracy and local people having the right to determine what happens to them in their communities. It involves local people having the right to determine what level of services they want and how they should be provided. The main issue involves local people having access to what is happening and the results of auditing procedures undertaken on their behalf, and a say in the way in which services are delivered. It involves stressing the importance of community provision, and enhancing individual liberty and opportunity.

Those issues are central to local government and will be to the fore in the campaign between now and the county council elections on 6 May. Those arguments and priorities will ultimately have the support of the British people, which will be shown in the county council elections on 6 May.

2.22 pm

Mr. Redwood: With the leave of the House, may I say that I am grateful to all those whose contributions have produced a good debate on the vital subject of the range of local authority responsibilities and services, and the best means of delivering them.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) challenged me on whether I stood by the things that I had written 16 years ago. I was flattered and not a little surprised that the Labour party researches its future policies in my articles written in 1977. I repeat what I said then. The community land legislation was wrong and the Conservative Administration were right to repeal it. Having both a structure and a local plan can be wasteful, which was why we moved to urban development plans in big urban areas and why we are asking whether each shire area needs one or two councils and whether it needs one or two plans. The answer will depend on local circumstances.

I said that housing could often be better provided by institutions and people rather than councils, which has been shown to be true. Most rented housing is made available through housing associations with a mixture of private and public finance. Some councils have stopped owning houses, but they still have excellent housing policies in their areas—often better than those of councils that have clung to the old, outmoded ideas that I was beginning to question as long ago as 1977.

Better recreational facilities can often be provided by using private expense. Local councils may wish to buy season tickets or offer help to individuals or groups who need access to those facilities. They may do better by their local communities organising it in that way than by buying and owning the facility.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Minister stand by his comment in 1977 that all swimming pools should be privatised?

Mr. Redwood: Swimming pools are often better run by the private sector. I hope that many will contract out or market-test the facilities. Many new facilities can be well provided by the private sector. I am keen to encourage it, unlike the hon. Gentleman, who seems to be saying that if something is not provided by the public sector it does not count and it is not a public facility. Those facilities that are provided at private expense are every bit as much public facilities, if open to the public, as are the others. The hon. Gentleman may want all golf courses to be municipally owned. I am happy to have a lot of private sector golf courses open to those who wish to use them.

The hon. Gentleman said that he and his party are still not in sympathy with standard spending assessments. However, both he and his party will, I believe, agree that there needs to be a method of calculating exactly how much grant each local authority receives. I do not think that the Labour party would argue the case that we should just send a fixed amount per head for every person in the country to the different local authority areas. They want a more sophisticated system than that, as well they might, because it tends to be their councils that receive far bigger grants as a result of the sophistication that we have introduced into the system.

I say both to the hon. Gentleman and to his hon. Friends who raised the standard spending assessment issue, and also to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), representing the Liberal Democrats, that we are now reviewing again this year the principles and the figures used in the SSA calculations. I should be delighted if the Labour party—even, perhaps, the Labour-Liberal alliance, or the Liberal party on its own—could come to an agreed view about how the SSAs should be calculated. We should be prepared to take that view fully into account in our considerations.

I have asked local government, of all parties and of none, to give the Department their best views. Again, I would hope that the local authority associations would try to bring their views closer together. I fear, however, that this year, as in past years, the interests of urban authorities will often be seen to be different from those of rural ones and that the interests of big towns will be seen to be different from those of villages and small towns. Sometimes, Labour authorities have a different view of their interests from Conservative ones, and so forth.

[Mr. Redwood]

It is not easy to bring it all together. Ultimately, only the Government and the House of Commons can decide exactly how the money is to be distributed. But it is a genuine consultation. I have not decided what the answer should be in advance; nor has the Secretary of State. We are open to discussion with all parties that are seriously interested in SSAs.

The House might like to know that I have not yet had a communication from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North, or from the shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, setting out what Labour's view is. I shall, of course, keep the House posted if they come to an agreed view among themselves.

I fear also that the House did not receive a completely frank account today from the shadow spokesman on the Labour party's policy towards compulsory competitive tendering. I think that progress is being made. Many Opposition Members agreed that competitive tendering can be valuable. Some agreed that competitive tendering and market testing can produce improved quality. Many agreed that it can often produce lower costs. Many also agreed that they have often been doing it in Labour authorities. But on the crucial issue of what the Labour party would recommend doing if a local authority refused to market test anything and was demonstrably inefficient, we did not get quite the clarity that we seek. Perhaps another debate will be needed to tease out that point.

In advance of the local elections—important elections to elect people to make big decisions about local services and the expenditure of large sums of money—there is naturally some considerable interest in the cost of the services and the range of services provided by the authorities controlled by the different parties. It is a pity that today the Labour party has seen fit yet again to try to mislead the public about what exactly is the difference in the cost of the provision of services for taxpayers in Labour and Conservative areas.

It is necessary, therefore, once again to remind the House that it is nearly always dearer to live under Labour local government than under Conservative local government and that the gap is now more than £100 per household for band C and band D households throughout the country. In every case, the highest taxes are imposed by Labour authorities and the lowest by Conservative authorities. Among county councils, Northumberland is the highest and Hampshire the lowest, and the gap for a band C taxpayer is almost £150 between the two. Among metropolitan districts, Newcastle, which is well known to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North, sets the highest tax, and Trafford, which is Conservative controlled, sets the lowest. The gap is almost £250 between the two. Among London boroughs, Greenwich, which is Labour controlled, charges £550 for borough services, compared with Westminster, which is Conservative controlled, at £117—an enormous gap of more than £400. That is the truth.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Government fiddled the grant.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman says that we fiddled the grant——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

CONSOLIDATION, &c., BILLS

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Charities Bill *[Lords]*, the Clean Air Bill *[Lords]* and the Rdioactive Substances Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bills have been read a second time.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

A45 Development (Bourn)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

2.30 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raised an issue that I have already raise once in the House. The area around the village of Bourn in my constituency and the 12 village communities in the area are delightful and are characteristic of Cambridgeshire and of the East Anglian countryside generally.

Given the fast growth of Cambridgeshire, it is essential to preserve the amenities and village character of the area. Otherwise, Cambrideshire will suffer the same fate as Greater London and parts of Middlesex and Surrey, which I knew before the war, which became long, ribbon-development concrete deserts. We must prevent that from happening again. If we get planning decisions wrong, the countryside and communities and the village character will be gone for ever.

I first raised this matter in the House on 28 November 1988. The original county structure plan came out in 1980. In July 1988, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, the late Lord Ridley, who, although he had many great virtues, was weak when confronted by developers, yielded to pressure for amendments to the structure plan, which therefore had to provide for a new settlement in south Cambridgeshire.

I want to quote from the reply of the then Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Christopher Chope, who said:

"It is essential that the policies contained in an approved plan are closely monitored and kept up to date to cater for the needs of the county." [*Official Report*, 28 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 557.]

I wholeheartedly agree with those important words.

Subsequently, planning applications were made for a number of settlements in the locality, all of which were rejected by the planning authority, so appeals were lodged. An extensive inquiry considered all the proposals of developers and speculators, including the one at Great Common farm, about which I am particularly concerned and which was the least favoured option of the planning authority, which turned them all down.

Eventually, the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, rejected all the appeals, but, unlike the district council planning authority, he accepted the inspector's recommendation that the scheme most suitable was Great Common farm at Bourn airfield. I need hardly say that, naturally, this has been the cause of immense anxiety among my constituents in the area. Therefore, they were delighted—as I was—when, just before the general election last year, the Secretary of State issued guidance stating clearly that new settlements would gain support only if they did not go against the wishes of the local community.

In that connection, I refer to a letter I personally received from the Prime Minister, dated 16 March 1992. He said:

"The new guidance sets out clearly that new settlements are likely to gain support only when they come through the local plan making process. This will encourage housebuilders to work with local planners and not to seek to impose plans against the wishes of the local communities . . . we do not favour a free-for-all in housing land supply. I hope the publication of the guidance will help allay the fears of your constituents."

It certainly did. It also allayed my fears, and we went confidently into the general election on that basis.

Following all that, plans were subsequently submitted by developers—now called Stanhope but originally known as McAlpine—which modified the original plan in order to meet some of the criticisms of the Secretary of State and the inspector. However, the plans which have now been submitted and which we are now considering are still flawed and still fail to meet the fundamental objections that were prevalent at the time of the original debate.

Various problems have still not been dealt with, including that of flooding and the inadequacy of the road system. Regional trends in the county of Cambridgeshire have consistently shown that, whereas we have the lowest unemployment rate and the best health in the country, we have the worst record—it is a disgrace—of road accidents in the whole of the United Kingdom. The new development will do nothing to improve that; in fact, it will make it much worse.

The new plan does not consider the problem of overcrowding in schools which will occur. It does not deal with the fact that it will detract from the Papworth and Caldecote developments which are already approved. In the South Cambridgeshire district council area, sufficient planning permissions are already in the pipeline to deal with all housing needs. If the new settlement is approved, there will be an excess of planning permissions, which will be wholly undersirable and impossible to cope with. Perhaps there should be some further development in north Cambridgeshire, which has employment and housing problems, but not in south Cambridgeshire, which is entirely the wrong place for such a development. Above all, it would damage the amenities for ever.

The scheme is not only seriously flawed but already utterly out of date. The county council has produced a new structure plan which rejects the whole concept of such a settlement. It rightly argues that such a settlement would not conform with population housing forecasts for the area which have been revised in the light of regional planning guidance. In those circumstances, it would be plum crazy to go ahead with a scheme that can only result in the biggest concrete white elephant in the county of Cambridgeshire.

I have sought to impress these facts on a number of Ministers, but my pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears. I am grateful to the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), for being here to reply to the debate. On 9 March this year, he sent me a confusing letter—it was so confusing that the district council had to seek counsel's opinion to find out what it meant. In effect, my hon. Friend threw the ball back to the district council and, what is more, appeared to reject the county council's proposals to dispose of the need for a new settlement. His Department issued a press statement, without, I must say, having the courtesy to inform me. The statement said that the county council had been told to delete reference to the new settlement in its structure plan because it wanted

"to secure plans which are not out of step with national policy".

What on earth does that mean? I thought that national policy was to ensure that development accorded with local needs which local people were best able to judge. Are we

[Sir Anthony Grant]

back in the "gentlemen in Whitehall know best" world? If the Prime Minister's letter means anything, it means that Government policy is that local wishes should prevail. That is what my constituents thought when they voted for the Government last year, and so did I.

I want my hon. Friend and the Government to be under no illusions: local people are passionately against the scheme. My postbag tells me that, and I know that the Minister's postbag does because I have seen copies of the many letters that have been sent to him. County councillor John Reynolds and district councillors Mrs. Daphne Spink and Mrs. Linda Tingey, all of whom are closely in touch with local opinion—far more so than I am—report how disastrous the settlement would be. They have consistently said so and have argued the case clearly in the forums in which they are concerned and in public.

It is no good the Minister saying that it is up to the district council planning authority to decide the matter when the Department hamstrings it with out-of-date restrictions which make it terrified of being sued by the speculators. There is a distinct danger of this being a case of Whitehall's Big Brother crushing local wishes with a vengeance.

Twelve parishes and their communities have formed the New Settlement Action Group. They are absolutely united against this folly. I consider that I and, more importantly, my constituents have been treated shabbily in the whole affair over a number of years. The settlement is not wanted and it is not needed by anyone. It is not wanted by the Standing Conference of East Anglian Local Authorities, and it is not wanted by the district council, by the county council, by the parishes or by the people. It is wanted only by greedy speculators who seem to terrorise the present Department as they did previous Departments. I ask the Minister to show more consideration and sympathy to my rightly concerned constituents than has hitherto been the case.

2.41 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): Before dealing with the substance of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge, South-West (Sir A. Grant), I shall deal with one matter he raised. It is important to consider how planning applications are dealt with in the House. There are frequently contentious planning matters, such as structure plans and district plans, which have to be dealt with by Ministers. We always seek to give parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House the best possible warning of any decisions that might affect their constituencies. I did that in respect of my hon. Friend. My private office sought to fax to his office the contents of the press release well before it was made available. I hope, therefore, that he will recognise on reflection that no discourtesy to him was intended and that we made every effort to let him know the facts.

Sir Anthony Grant: I am sure that no discourtesy was intended. My point was simply that all the attempts to send faxes and messages failed.

Mr. Baldry: There is no profit in going into the matter further—I just wanted to make it clear to my hon. Friend that every effort was made to ensure that he was warned of the decision.

My hon. Friend has consistently opposed any new settlement west of Cambridge and he has expressed his concerns with clarity and force today, as he did to Mr. Chope, the Under-Secretary of State in 1988, when there was a very similar debate in which very similar sentiments were expressed. I hope that it will be helpful for me to set out the background to the decisions taken in the past few years which will enable us to understand the present position in respect of any new settlement in the A45 corridor.

Policies for a new settlement in both the A10 corridor to the north of Cambridge and the A45 corridor to the west and east of Cambridge were included in the Cambridgeshire structure plan, which was put forward by the county council and approved by the Secretary of State in March 1989. In approving the structure plan, however, the Secretary of State halved the size of a new settlement proposed for the A10 corridor from 3,000 to 1,500 homes and inserted—as he was entitled to—proposals for a new settlement of 3,000 homes in the A45 corridor. I fully appreciate that the county council has been consistently unhappy about the proposal and in fact rejected it before submitting the structure plan review to the Secretary of State. The background to the proposals was the regional need to ensure adequate housing provision in Cambridgeshire until the turn of the century.

Following the approval of the structure plan in 1989, three proposals were made for new settlements in the A10 corridor—two in south Cambridgeshire and one in east Cambridgeshire—and eight proposals for new settlement were made in the A45 corridor, six in south Cambridgeshire and two in east Cambridgeshire. My hon. Friend said that he thought that those applications were refused and that there were appeals. In fact, all the applications were called in by the Secretary of State for his determination. Clearly, he felt it important that all of them should be considered together, so that all the arguments could be heard together by an inspector and a view could be taken on their merits. As a consequence, major public inquiries were held during late 1990 and 1991.

In the event, all those specific proposals were rejected. Those on the A10 corridor were refused because all three failed to provide for the Department of Transport's requirement for a grade-separated junction together with 1 km of dual carriageway either side of that junction to give access to the A10. On the A45 corridor, which is of particular concern to my hon. Friend, the location at Great Common farm, which is west of Cambridge but south of the A45 in south Cambridgeshire, emerged as the clear preference of the inspector, but the specific proposals were rejected by the Secretary of State at that time because a business part associated with the proposal was considered, at 1 million sq ft, to be too large for that location.

That decision was reached at the end of a most careful consideration of the inspector's report prepared after many months of inquiry time. The public inquiry lasted 82 days—involving 74 sitting days and eight site visits—and heard evidence from 101 witnesses. No useful purpose would be served by yet a further inquiry into any site-specific proposals.

Since that decision was issued in March 1992, there have been further events which influence the possible siting of new settlements in south Cambridgeshire—including national planning policy guidance set out in planning policy guidance note 3, published in March 1992, two fresh planning applications, a consultation draft of the review to the structure plan, and the district council's own local plan.

The Government's policy on new settlements is set out in planning policy guidance note 3, published in March 1992 following the enactment of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. As my hon. Friend has made clear, in quoting my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, one criterion for any new settlement is that the proposal should have a clear expression of local preference supported by local planning authorities and should not go against the wishes of the local community. The guidance also states:

"The need to respect local preference means that specific proposals for new settlements should normally only be promoted through the district-wide local plan."

The south Cambridgeshire district-wide local plan being drawn up by the local council is the key to all these matters, and to my hon. Friend's concerns. That plan is well advanced and has reached the proposed modifications stage. It assumes that 3,000 new homes in its approved structure plan housing provision up to 2001 will be found in a new settlement in the A45 corridor. It also contains policies in respect of associated development, such as the 50 acres for business development.

Cambridgeshire county council has published the consultation draft of its review of the approved structure plan, extending the period covered up to 2006. It is clear that it takes a different view from that of the Secretary of State. In that draft it proposed, first, the deletion of the approved policy for a new settlement of 3,000 dwellings in the A45 corridor, whether west or east of Cambridge, but included the continuation of the policy for a new settlement in the A10 corridor, in either east or south Cambridgeshire, of 1,500 dwellings, but within the extended plan period to 2006.

The county council has clearly stated its opposition to an A45 new settlement. Also, by retaining the A10 new settlement at 1,500 dwellings rather than the 3,000 originally proposed, it is not giving any additional scope for any proposed development to pay for the infrastructure costs associated with the grade-separated junction to the A10, the expected contribution to the fen link road, water and drainage costs in this low-lying area, or to provide for a reasonable proportion of affordable housing. In short, the county council's proposals are unrealistic.

However, I am clear that PPG3 gives explicit guidance that it is the district-wide local plan which is the appropriate forum for making choices in respect of new settlements and that the Government's "plan-led" approach, as embodied in the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, should be seen to work through the decisions of the local district councils wherever possible.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has examined the south Cambridgeshire local plan very carefully. He and all Ministers concerned with planning matters in the Department are fully aware of the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West. We have therefore considered the local plan carefully in relation to the new settlement proposals. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is satisfied that its provisions are not such as to change significantly the circumstances in which these new settlement proposals are being considered since the decision letter of March 1992.

My hon. Friend is aware that our right hon. and learned Friend has come to the conclusion that there has not been a change in circumstances since March 1992, when his decision letter on the earlier proposals was issued, to justify his interventing in the present applications before South Cambridgeshire district council. My hon. Friend will, I am sure, appreciate that the Secretary of State could effectively intervene only by calling in those proposals and holding yet a further public inquiry. As I have already made clear, these matters have already been the subject of extensive, lengthy and detailed public inquiries and a further inquiry would have no significant benefits and would inevitably involve delay, uncertainty and costs.

Sir Anthony Grant: With regard to delay, a possible solution to the problem would be for the district council, as planning authority, to delay taking a decision on the matter until the county structure plan is resolved. I understand that that will occur next year. The matter has, admittedly, been going on for a long time. A little more delay might result in the district council concluding that the county is absolutely right, as I believe that it is, and the plan being rejected. We should not then have the absurd situation of an out-of-date planning permission being accepted.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend and I are absolutely at one in agreeing that it must be for South Cambridgeshire district council to take those decisions. I firmly believe that South Cambridgeshire district council is best placed to decide on whether there should be a new settlement, having particular regard to its own local plan policies, and to decide the best location for any such settlement.

My hon. Friend mentioned various elected members of the council. They are in a prime position to influence their authority's decision because it must be for the district council to judge whether the developer's proposals are satisfactory in all respects. It is not sufficient for a developer to say, "My development accords with various proposals by the Secretary of State in relation to the structure plan of some years ago." Many other issues must be considered—including many mentioned by my hon. Friend, such as flooding and road transport difficulties. The district council will quite properly have to take such matters into account.

The council is well placed to make such judgments. It has been closely involved in the philosophy of new settlements around Cambridge in recent years. It played a pivotal role during the public inquiries into the new settlement proposals and its own local plan is close to adoption. It would not be right for the council to postpone its local plan to await further modifications to the county structure plan. South Cambridgeshire councillors are well aware of all the options for satisfying the need for local housing, including those for affordable housing. Those councillors must take the necessary decisions.

[Mr. Baldry]

The Secretary of State is satisfied that South Cambridgeshire district council, as the local planning authority, is best placed to decide on these two outstanding planning applications. In so far as the council has raised queries with us about that approach, we have sought to answer in the fullest possible detail. I think that the council now has a full appreciation of the possibilities that are open to it. As I have said, it must be for the council to decide whether there should be a new settlement and the best location for it.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 29 March 1993

TRANSPORT

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Norris: The details of the Department's market testing programme were published in the citizens charter —first report 1992. This programme is being carried forward by the Department and tendering is to commence shortly within the programme's current timetable.

The programme for the 12 months commencing in September 1993 will be announced within the time scales established with the Office of Public Services and Science; this is in common with other Departments.

The current market testing programme does not draw a distinction between professional services or otherwise.

Crossrail

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the new underground stations for the crossrail project will conform with the most recent safety standards for the Underground; what assessment he has made of the amount of land required to meet these standards other than that specified in the Bill as deposited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I am assured by the promoters that the new crossrail stations will all conform with up-to-date safety standards, and that the Bill specifies all land that is required to enable those standards to be met at those stations.

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the original and subsequent forecasts used to evaluate the crossrail project were last updated; what assessment he has made of the cost-effectiveness of the project using the latest figures; and if they will be made public.

Mr. Norris: The most recently completed reappraisal of the original and subsequent analyses was that carried out in 1991. I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 19 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns 210-11. A further reappraisal is in hand, and this will take into account the re-examination announced in the Budget on 16 March 1993.

Bus Deregulation (London)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the extension, the improvement and the reduction in price of bus services in London that would be gained by deregulation over and beyond the benefits of tendering and of the introduction of new services by London Buses.

Mr. Norris: We shall be setting out our views on the benefits of deregulating London's bus services compared with further route tendering in our memorandum to the Transport Select Committee, which will be submitted shortly.

Red Routes

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in implementing the red route network in London.

Mr. Norris: Following public consultation, the traffic director for London has today published his network plan, which provides the framework for the design and operation of the 315-mile priority red route network. Copies of the network plan have been placed in the Library.

Drivers, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his objectives for the privatisation of the DVOIT executive agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The key objectives for this sale are:

"1 To sell DVOIT as soon as is reasonably practicable.
2 To maximise the net receipts from the sale, subject to the achievement of the following other objectives:
(i) ensure that DOT and its agencies obtain, as part of the sale, contracts for the privision of IS/IT services appropriate to their business requirements, including vfm, quality, flexibility and security, at the lowest market price; and
(ii) to obtain reassurance that the purchaser should have the capacity to meet transferred liabilities and obligations."

Transport Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), of 18 March, *Official Report*, columns *339-40*, what were the voting figures for each member state recorded in the meeting of the European Community Transport Council held on 15 March.

Mr. MacGregor: No formal votes were taken.

British Rail Pensions

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to ensure that full pension obligations are guaranteed by British Rail and any successors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As I informed Standing Committee B on 23 March, I intend to introduce a new clause and schedule to the Railways Bill to cover pension arrangements after the privatisation of British Rail. This will provide the required security of pension rights for the members of British Rail's pension schemes.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding British

Rail pension funds from *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* rail unions, *(c)* British Rail management and *(d)* prospective franchisees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As I informed Standing Committee B on 23 March, we have received representations from many persons and bodies. We are still consulting on these issues, and we will announce the outcome once decisions have been taken.

Red Star Parcels

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to seek tenders for the sale of Red Star Parcels.

Mr. Freeman: The British Railways Board is handling the sale of Red Star Parcels. The sale will be advertised as soon as the relevant documentation has been completed.

British Rail

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received since 2 February concerning *(a)* the proposal for Railtrack to be independent of British Rail, *(b)* the principle of equal access by train operators to the rail infrastructure and *(c)* the numbers of different organisations working on the rail network under the privatisation proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on these matters.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he is considering concerning the lease or sale of rolling stock maintenance depots; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The options are still being considered and final conclusions have not yet been reached. The type of maintenance being carried out and the location of depots are important factors. Options under consideration include: independent sale; transfer of depots to franchisees; transfer to rolling stock companies.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the results to date of British Rail's "organising for quality" initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that "organising for quality" has been valuable in establishing clear lines of responsibility and accountability within the larger BR organisation.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from *(a)* passengers' groups, *(b)* passenger transport authorities and *(c)* consumer groups since 2 February about the Railways Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of representations from various bodies, mainly in response to the consultation documents prepared by the Department. In addition, officials of my Department are engaged in a programme of meetings with representatives from the PTAs and PTEs in order to examine issues arising from the franchising of PTE-supported services.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received from potential franchisees concerning proposals to allow Railtrack to own and control the railway network; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the future commercial development of rail stations; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received concerning the likely length of franchises from *(a)* rolling stock companies and *(b)* potential operators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have received various representations on these points, mainly in response to the consultation documents on franchising and on rolling stock which were issued to elicit views.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Mercer report concerning British Rail's freight operations will be published.

Mr. Freeman: The report contains much commercially sensitive information and will not be published, but the Government's conclusions based on Mercer's work, and incorporating its findings as appropriate, will be published as soon as the decisions have been taken.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to establish public sector leasing companies for rolling stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: On 27 January, the Government issued a consultation document on the provision of rolling stock after privatisation. The document outlined a number of options, including the creation of public sector leasing companies which, in due course, would be offered for sale. These options are currently being discussed with the industry, financiers and other interested parties. I intend to make a policy statement after Easter in the light of these dicussions.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether Railtrack will still retain ownership of operational land if a rail station is sold or leased; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Railtrack will retain ownership of the freehold of stations. Stations may be leased by Railtrack to franchises or independent station operators.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who will be responsible for research and development, pursuant to his proposals in the Railways Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I hope to make an announcement after the Easter recess.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to protect land currently owned by British Rail and has potential for railway development, pursuant to his proposals in the Railways Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Land with a current or potential operational use will generally be transferred, on a freehold basis, to Railtrack. It is intended that non-operational land should remain with the Brtish Railways Board.

As at present, before any land is offered for disposal its potential future use for railway development will be fully explored.

Infrastructure Developments

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to secure private sector investment for major infrastructure developments in *(a)* the railway network and *(b)* roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We wish to open up new ways to make the best use of private sector skills, initiative and funds in the provision of transport infrastructure.

British Rail and the British Airports Authority have agreed in principle a joint venture to build a new rail express link between Paddington and Heathrow airport. The Department of Transport, with Samuel Montagu and Co and Union Railways, will be discussing with the private sector their participation in a joint venture on the channel tunnel rail link. In the case of crossrail, we are appointing consultants to advise us how best to ensure maximum private sector involvement.

The new Queen Elizabeth II bridge at Dartford, which opened in 1991 was privately financed. Construction of a privately financed second Severn bridge is under way and a concession agreement has been signed for the construction, using private finance, of the Birmingham northern relief road. My right hon. Friend plans to publish a Green Paper on the basis of charging for inter-urban roads and the scope for more private sector investment in their construction and operation.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what recent representations he has received about eligibility for legal aid under his proposed changes to those just above income support level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have received a number of representations about various aspects of the changes to legal aid eligibility, including the position of those whose incomes are just above income support level. Assessments are based on disposable income and a generous range of allowances are offset against gross earnings.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the latest timetable for introduction of his proposed changes in eligibility for legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The regulations to introduce the changes have been laid before Parliament, and are due to come into effect on 12 April.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the cost to the legal aid fund of providing assistance and representation in the four trials relating to alleged criminal activities concerning Guinness plc.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal aid cost to date of the Guinness trials is £1·7 million. The majority of this relates to the first trial, the costs of which are currently the subject of an appeal. The remainder consists of costs paid in respect of part of the second trial. The full costs of the second trial and the costs of the third and fourth trials have yet to be determined.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases have been brought before each convenient area of magistrates courts in the last available quarter, and for an equivalent period one and two years earlier.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

Information available centrally on persons prosecuted in magistrates courts during the last quarters of 1989 to 1991 by commission of the peace area and type of offence is given in the tables. Data for 1992 will not be available until autumn 1993.

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts for all offences by commission of the peace area and type of offence

1989 (quarter 4)

Commission of the peace area	*Indictable*	*Summary non-motoring*	*Summary motoring*	*All offences*
Avon	2,152	2,574	4,044	8,770
Bedfordshire	1,073	1,758	2,058	4,889
Berkshire	900	1,523	2,298	4,621
Buckinghamshire	931	1,205	2,549	4,685
Cambridgeshire	1,311	1,367	2,390	5,068
Cheshire	2,004	1,946	4,241	8,191
Cleveland	1,464	2,093	1,783	5,340
Cornwall	568	362	1,121	2,051
Cumbria	1,126	1,791	2,497	5,414
Derbyshire	1,909	2,085	3,814	7,808
Devon	1,700	1,670	3,550	6,920
Dorset	1,198	967	2,493	4,658
Durham	1,389	1,765	2,369	5,523
Essex	2,700	3,801	6,313	12,814
Gloucestershire	1,093	1,247	2,376	4,716
Greater Manchester	7,053	7,945	11,914	26,912
Hampshire	3,148	3,104	5,981	12,233
Hereford and Worcester	1,220	945	3,589	5,754
Hertfordshire	1,657	1,882	3,586	7,125
Humberside	1,872	2,809	2,793	7,474

Commission of the peace area	Indictable	Summary non-motoring	Summary motoring	All offences
Isle of Wight	190	158	355	703
Kent	1,604	2,310	4,236	8,150
Lancashire	3,278	3,808	6,139	13,225
Leicestershire	1,351	2,284	3,569	7,204
Lincolnshire	1,197	1,282	2,450	4,929
Inner London and City	7,713	12,310	11,241	31,264
London, North East	1,701	2,215	2,224	6,060
London, South East	636	1,119	1,312	3,067
London, South West	919	1,087	1,139	3,145
London, Middlesex	2,510	4,113	4,262	10,885
Merseyside	4,470	5,638	5,284	15,392
Norfolk	1,172	1,318	3,405	5,895
Northamptonshire	1,103	2,114	2,615	5,832
Northumberland	493	607	1,454	2,554
North Yorkshire	1,324	1,528	2,485	5,337
Nottinghamshire	3,184	2,847	3,158	9,189
Oxfordshire	757	883	1,984	3,624
Shropshire	688	971	1,287	2,946
Somerset	716	988	2,164	3,868
South Yorkshire	3,154	3,803	4,615	11,572
Staffordshire	2,146	3,000	5,051	10,197
Suffolk	1,111	1,310	2,565	4,986
Surrey	1,411	1,356	4,335	7,102
East Sussex	1,401	2,006	3,205	6,612
West Sussex	1,247	1,711	3,667	6,625
Tyne and Wear	3,212	4,339	2,873	10,424
Warwickshire	780	750	2,446	3,976
West Midlands	7,414	7,080	10,219	24,713
West Yorkshire	5,147	6,826	8,945	20,918
Wiltshire	875	1,359	2,437	4,671
England	99,372	123,779	182,880	406,031
Clwyd	970	902	2,044	3,916
Dyfed	588	1,072	1,181	2,841
Mid Glamorgan	1,405	1,810	2,038	5,253
South Glamorgan	1,516	1,790	1,380	4,686
West Glamorgan	1,064	1,592	1,696	4,352
Gwent	1,369	2,245	1,948	5,562
Gwynedd	590	490	1,124	2,204
Powys	209	305	534	1,048
Wales	7,711	10,206	11,945	29,862
ENGLAND AND WALES	107,083	133,985	194,825	435,893

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts for all offences by commission of the peace area and type of offence

1990 (quarter 4)

Commission of the peace area	Indictable	Summary non-motoring	Summary motoring	All offences
Avon	2,103	2,890	4,174	9,167
Bedfordshire	1,182	1,740	2,565	5,487
Berkshire	1,454	1,614	2,940	6,008
Buckinghamshire	1,218	1,237	3,334	5,789
Cambridgeshire	1,429	1,789	2,684	5,902
Cheshire	1,950	1,924	4,387	8,261
Cleveland	1,509	1,959	1,977	5,445
Cornwall	562	485	1,353	2,400
Cumbria	1,172	1,603	2,616	5,391
Derbyshire	1,923	1,877	3,901	7,701
Devon	1,636	2,124	5,336	9,096
Dorset	1,255	1,025	2,537	4,817
Durham	1,474	1,789	2,030	5,293
Essex	2,926	3,312	7,133	13,371
Gloucestershire	1,006	1,133	2,477	4,616
Greater Manchester	6,887	8,173	12,902	27,962
Hampshire	3,170	3,216	7,504	13,890
Hereford and Worcester	1,298	1,292	3,054	5,644
Hertfordshire	1,530	2,022	3,467	7,019
Humberside	1,930	2,467	2,730	7,127
Isle of Wight	222	263	259	744
Kent	1,706	1,683	4,569	7,958

Commission of te peace area	Indictable	Summary non-motoring	Summary motoring	All offences
Lancashire	3,527	3,984	8,429	15,940
Leicestershire	1,759	3,025	6,169	10,953
Lincolnshire	1,258	1,162	2,743	5,163
Inner London and City	7,961	11,005	12,053	31,019
London, North East	1,737	2,344	2,289	6,370
London, South East	777	677	1,164	2,618
London, South West	884	1,245	1,339	3,468
London, Middlesex	3,092	4,259	4,120	11,471
Merseyside	5,114	5,589	5,503	16,206
Norfolk	1,344	1,280	3,238	5,862
Northamptonshire	1,194	1,728	2,929	5,851
Northumberland	447	694	1,724	2,865
North Yorkshire	1,496	1,716	2,451	5,663
Nottinghamshire	3,399	3,522	3,406	10,327
Oxfordshire	862	1,060	2,722	4,644
Shropshire	784	1,144	1,175	3,103
Somerset	749	1,051	2,289	4,089
South Yorkshire	3,165	4,238	4,761	12,164
Staffordshire	2,517	2,704	4,974	10,195
Suffolk	1,206	1,285	2,482	4,973
Surrey	1,564	1,404	4,137	7,105
East Sussex	1,447	1,642	2,645	5,734
West Sussex	1,359	1,572	3,152	6,083
Tyne and Wear	3,060	4,485	3,236	10,781
Warwickshire	786	693	2,092	3,571
West Midlands	8,241	7,392	11,912	27,545
West Yorkshire	5,304	6,554	9,290	21,148
Wiltshire	1,073	1,632	4,189	6,894
England	105,648	124,703	200,542	430,893
Clwyd	994	1,016	2,108	4,118
Dyfed	769	1,037	1,205	3,011
Mid Glamorgan	1,642	1,896	2,318	5,856
South Glamorgan	1,701	2,443	1,583	5,727
West Glamorgan	1,093	1,487	1,655	4,245
Gwent	1,467	2,699	1,950	6,116
Gwynedd	596	445	1,270	2,311
Powys	240	325	511	1,076
Wales	8,502	11,348	12,610	32,460
Other (not recorded)	7	223	382	612
ENGLAND AND WALES	114,157	136,274	213,534	463,965

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts for all offences by commission of the peace area and type of offence

1991 (quarter 4)

Commission of the peace area	Indictable	Summary non-motoring	Summary motoring	All offences
Avon	2,049	2,776	4,733	9,558
Bedfordshire	1,043	1,769	2,242	5,054
Berkshire	1,576	1,724	2,953	6,253
Buckinghamshire	1,083	1,119	2,797	4,999
Cambridgeshire	1,354	1,496	2,008	4,858
Cheshire	2,007	1,934	3,079	7,020
Cleveland	1,675	2,428	2,189	6,292
Cornwall	553	574	1,287	2,414
Cumbria	1,327	1,814	3,130	6,271
Derbyshire	1,903	2,310	3,684	7,897
Devon	1,869	2,359	5,178	9,406
Dorset	1,342	889	2,633	4,864
Durham	1,395	1,801	2,000	5,196
Essex	3,165	3,840	8,900	15,905
Gloucestershire	1,102	1,311	3,643	6,056
Greater Manchester	7,365	7,778	12,790	27,933
Hampshire	3,328	3,747	6,830	13,905
Hereford and Worcester	1,228	1,142	2,710	5,080
Hertfordshire	1,658	1,757	3,519	6,934
Humberside	2,000	2,690	2,632	7,322
Isle of Wight	252	168	323	743
Kent	1,101	461	4,045	5,607
Lancashire	3,253	3,229	6,866	13,348

Commission of te peace area	Indictable	Summary non-motoring	Summary motoring	All offences
Leicestershire	1,766	2,948	4,731	9,445
Lincolnshire	1,181	927	2,535	4,643
Inner London and City	8,121	12,599	18,581	39,301
London, North East	1,870	2,021	3,372	7,263
London, South East	574	172	1,510	2,256
London, South West	809	1,294	1,942	4,045
London, Middlesex	3,474	5,255	8,107	16,836
Merseyside	5,555	6,321	5,595	17,471
Norfolk	1,499	1,508	2,887	5,894
Northamptonshire	1,345	1,949	3,042	6,336
Northumberland	575	633	1,489	2,697
North Yorkshire	1,642	1,730	2,884	6,256
Nottinghamshire	3,428	4,632	2,819	10,879
Oxfordshire	860	1,070	2,504	4,434
Shropshire	752	1,300	1,404	3,456
Somerset	755	1,274	2,465	4,494
South Yorkshire	3,381	3,920	4,188	11,489
Staffordshire	2,553	2,791	5,208	10,552
Suffolk	1,328	1,326	2,814	5,468
Surrey	1,510	1,471	4,490	7,471
East Sussex	1,757	2,239	2,339	6,335
West Sussex	1,272	2,115	2,894	6,281
Tyne and Wear	3,559	4,537	3,184	11,280
Warwickshire	761	696	2,218	3,675
West Midlands	7,646	7,351	12,019	27,016
West Yorkshire	6,002	6,792	9,529	22,323
Wiltshire	1,168	1,475	2,547	5,190
England	108,771	129,462	207,468	445,701
Clwyd	1,030	1,096	2,083	4,209
Dyfed	809	1,178	1,436	3,423
Mid Glamorgan	1,663	1,610	1,674	4,947
South Glamorgan	1,822	2,126	1,850	5,798
West Glamorgan	1,214	1,782	1,846	4,842
Gwent	1,240	2,395	1,512	5,147
Gwynedd	385	227	1,185	1,797
Powys	194	346	524	1,064
Wales	8,357	10,760	12,110	31,227
Other (not recorded)	7	291	317	615
England and Wales	117,135	140,513	219,895	477,543

DEFENCE

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence over which areas of his Department's land the Surrey Union hunt has a licence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Surrey Union hunt has a licence to hunt over the Aldershot military lands and Surrey commons training areas.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the total receipts in 1991-92 from licences for fox hunts to hunt on his Department's land.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Total receipts in 1991-92 from annual fox hunting licences were £729·85.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent Army personnel from mounted units are permitted to use Army horses and equipment to participate in *(a)* deer or stag hunting and *(b)* cub hunting in off-duty hours; whether a charge is made; and who is responsible for veterinary fees following an injury to a horse owned by his Department used for hunting by personnel in mounted units hunting in off-duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel from mounted units are not permitted to use Army horses or equipment to hunt in off-duty hours.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances personnel from non-mounted units are permitted to hunt in duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Personnel from non-mounted units are not normally permitted to hunt in duty hours. In exceptional circumstances, however, and at the commanding officer's discretion, it may be permitted provided there is no detriment to military tasks.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Army personnel from the Royal Military College of Science are permitted to use his Department's equipment when hunting in duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is only one MOD horse stabled in the saddle club at the Royal Military College of Science and it is not used for hunting. No other MOD equipment is held by the saddle club.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision is made for members of the armed forces from non-mounted units to use Army horses and equipment for fox hunting during duty or non-duty hours.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. When using Army horses, off-duty personnel from non-mounted units are required to pay for the hire of the horse, which covers the cost of veterinary services, and to take out comprehensive insurance. They would normally provide their own equipment.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details and dates of when the Household Cavalry participated in fox hunting, with which hunts and on how many occasions, since January 1991.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information for the period October 1992 to February 1993 is set out in the table. No additional costs to public funds were incurred as a result of this activity.

Date	*Number*
The Belvoir Hunt	
28 October 1992	1
31 October 1992	1
11 November 1992	1
14 November 1992	4
18 November 1992	1
21 November 1992	4
25 November 1992	4
2 December 1992	4
9 December 1992	3
12 December 1992	4
15 December 1992	2
19 December 1992	4
6 January 1993	1
9 January 1993	4
13 January 1993	3
16 January 1993	3
20 January 1993	3
23 January 1993	4
27 January 1993	3
30 January 1993	2
3 February 1993	2
6 February 1993	4
10 February 1993	3
13 February 1993	3
20 February 1993	4
24 February 1993	3
6 March 1993	4
The Quorn Hunt	
16 November 1992	4
20 November 1992	4
23 November 1992	4
27 November 1992	2
30 November 1992	3
4 December 1992	2
7 December 1992	4
11 December 1992	4
14 December 1992	4
18 December 1992	4
21 December 1992	4
28 December 1992	2
8 January 1993	3
11 January 1993	4
15 January 1993	3
18 January 1993	3
22 January 1993	4
25 January 1993	2
29 January 1993	4
1 February 1993	3
5 February 1993	3
8 February 1993	2
12 February 1993	3
15 February 1993	4
19 February 1993	2
22 February 1993	3
26 February 1993	1
5 March 1993	4
8 March 1993	2
The Cottesmore Hunt	
17 November 1992	1
24 November 1992	1
8 December 1992	1
15 December 1992	2
22 December 1992	2
29 December 1992	1
12 January 1993	2
19 January 1993	2
9 February 1993	2
23 February 1993	1

The remainder of the information requested is not immediately available, and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who meets the costs of the Army personnel attending the horses and driving horse boxes when the Household Cavalry attend hunts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The salary costs of the Army personnel attending horses and driving horse boxes when the Household Cavalry attends hunts are met from public funds; however, they reflect the cost of maintaining mounted units in the Army and arise irrespective of whether soldiers and army horses take part in hunting. No additional costs to public funds are incurred.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in 1991 and 1992 the Royal Military Police have hunted; and with which hunts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Military Police do not hunt; but on three occasions in 1991 and three occasions in 1992, two non-commissioned officers and horses from the Royal Military Police mounted troop were deployed on duty at the request of and in support of the Surrey constabulary, who were policing hunts in Surrey which could have crossed Ministry of Defence land.

Shooting Rights

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual income received for the shooting seasons 1991-92 and 1992-93 from the sale of shooting days at the Bulford and Tidworth garrison shoot in Salisbury in Wiltshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has granted a licence to the Bulford and Tidworth garrison shoot to shoot over land in Salisbury in Wiltshire, and does not sell individual shooting days.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what areas of his Department's land the HMS Heron sporting gun club has sport shooting rights; what charge is made for shooting rights; and which birds and mammals it is authorised to shoot.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The HMS Heron sporting gun club has licences to shoot over my Department's land at Merryfield airfield and Langport ranges. These licences authorise its members to shoot all unprotected birds and animals, including ground game, but excluding deer. The assessed charge is a matter of commercial confidentiality between my Department and the club.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers and men, and of what rank, took part in sport shooting at the Bulford and Tidworth garrison shoot in the 1991-92 and 1992-93 shooting season; and what was the total number of birds shot during these seasons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ninety-one officers and 32 service men took part in the 1991-92 shoot, and 93 officers and 33 service men took part in the 1992-93 shoot. A breakdown of their ranks could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The total numbers of birds shot during these seasons were 3,223 and 2,871 respectively.

Belize

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom armed forces personnel are currently stationed in Belize; and what is the planned future level of deployment there.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of force levels in Belize were given in the House of Commons Defence Committee Eighth report, Session 1987-88. There have been no substantive changes since then. We keep all our commitments, and the associated force levels, under review.

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel are based in or seconded to the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of personnel from Her Majesty's armed forces are currently providing military assistance to the United Arab Emirates. Details of the assistance provided and the number of personnel involved, are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether military personnel from the United Arab Emirates have undergone training in the United Kingdom in 1992 or 1993.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Nationals from the United Arab Emirates are attending and have attended a range of developmental and technical training courses in British military establishments. Details of the training, including numbers involved, are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the United Arab Emirates.

Falkland War (Troops' Behaviour)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on discussions he has had during his visit to the Falkland Islands on alleged misbehaviour of British troops in 1982.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend did not enter into any discussions on this subject during his recent trip to the Falkland Islands. He has referred the matter to the Attorney-General, and the allegations are currently being investigated by the Metropolitan police.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his practice to publish the amount of payments which have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the United States Government in respect of each British nuclear weapons test since 1979.

Mr. Aitken: No. In accordance with the policy of successive Governments, it is not in the national interest to publish costs associated with the testing of British nuclear weapons.

Amphibious Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the landing platform helicopter.

Mr. Aitken: The amphibious helicopter carrier (LPH) remains in the defence programme. We have now invited the tenderers to clarify their bids, which we will evaluate against our normal technical and value for money criteria. We expect to place an order later this year, subject to the results of the competition.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Executive Agencies

Mr. Bates: To ask the Attorney-General what further progress he has made towards establishing executive agencies in his Department under the Government's next steps initiative; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: On 18 February 1992, my predecessor informed the House, *Official Report*, columns 71-72, that the Treasury Solicitor's department property division had been selected as a candidate for executive agency status. I am pleased to announce that I shall be establishing the Government property lawyers as an Executive Agency on 1 April, as envisaged by my predecessor. I will ensure that the chief executive has clear responsibilities for improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service. These responsibilities will be set out in the agency's framework document, which will be published and copies placed in the Library.

Targets are set out in the agency's strategic plan and will form part of its annual business plans. An annual report and accounts will be produced, and copies also put in the Library.

The Government Property Lawyers Agency is at present the property division of the Treasury Solicitor's department. It has about 130 staff based in Taunton. The agency will continue to provide conveyancing and lands advisory services to Government Departments and other publicly funded bodies but on a more commercial basis. It will have to compete with private firms of solicitors for the services it provides. The establishment of the Government property lawyers as an executive agency will provide the appropriate structure and discipline to enhance its ability to supply a more efficient, economic and effective delivery of conveyancing and lands advisory services to its clients. I have approved the appointment of Mr. Anthony Osborne, the present head of the property division, to be the agency's first chief executive.

The key performance targets are as follows:

For 1993-94: to recover the full operating cost of the agency; to achieve 6,000 new instructions from its clients; to increase the number of completions effected to 5,910; to maintain and improve the quality of service, in particular by keeping the proportions of cases completed satisfactorily (ie without requiring rectification by reason of any fault of the agency) on or before the target date at or above the current rate of 99·5 per cent.

Over the three-year period of the strategic plan: to achieve a steady reduction in operating costs of an average of 2 per cent. per year in real terms.

I wish the chief executive and his staff every success for the future.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Debt

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the outstanding aggregate national debt in 1979 and its lowest level between then and the present day, together with the current level and that envisaged at the end of the 1997-98 financial year under the estimates of table 1 of his leaflet, "The Budget in Brief".

Mr. Lamont: Chart 2·5 in the 1993-94 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" shows data and projections up to end 1997-98 for the ratio of net public sector debit to GDP. This ratio fell from 49½ per cent. at end 1978-79 to 27¼ per cent. at end 1990-91, but has since risen to an estimated 33¼ per cent. at end 1992-93. The PSBR projections in table 1 of "The Budget in Brief" imply a ratio of 49¾ per cent. at end 1997-98.

Domestic Fuel

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *767*, if he will publish figures on the same basis showing expenditure on domestic fuel by region.

Mr. Nelson: The sample size used to derive the information given in my answer of 26 February in column *767* is not large enough to provide reliable regional estimates.

Departmental Courses

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Departments to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that this information is not held in the form requested and could be made available for a five-year period only at disproportionate expense.

Personal Tax Allowances

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of additional taxpayers in 1993-94 as a result of the freeze in personal tax allowances.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of people in each region brought into paying income tax as a consequence of the freeze in personal allowances.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates show that about 300,000 more people will pay tax in 1993-94 under Budget proposals compared with indexation of personal allowances. I regret that information is not available on a regional basis.

Family Expenditure Survey

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were interviewed in his Department's current family expenditure survey; and if he will break down the figures by social class.

Mr. Nelson: Processing of the second half of the current (1992) family expenditure survey is not yet complete. In the first half of 1992, 7,160 people were interviewed in 3,761 households. In 1991, 13,329 people were interviewed in 7,056 households. Figures of the social class of the head of these households are as follows:

	1992 Quarters 1 and 2	*1991*
Numbers of households interviewed	3,761	7,056
Social Class I (Professional, etc. occupations)	190	375
Social Class II (Managerial and Technical occupations)	657	1,309
Social Class III N (Skilled occupations—non-manual)	297	562
Social Class III M (Skilled occupations—manual)	676	1,296
Social Class IV (Partly skilled occupations)	335	567
Social Class V (Unskilled occupations)	117	189
Other Heads of Household (e.g. Armed Forces)	17	38
Unallocated (e.g. retired, unoccupied)	1,472	2,720

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what conclusions have been reached by the investigations to date into the collapse of BCCI on local authority investment practice.

Mr. Portillo: The scrutiny of local authorities' financial practices is the responsibility of statutory independent auditors appointed by the Audit Commission in England and Wales and the Accounts Commission in Scotland. The Government keep under review the general controls that they have upon local authorities' borrowing and investment activities.

Tax Havens

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to amend the Finance Act 1981 to prevent the use of company ownership transfers from the United Kingdom to tax havens as a means of avoiding liability for capital gains tax and maintaining the possibility of recovering outstanding tax on United Kingdom dividends at a later stage.

Mr. Dorrell: I have noted this suggestion. There are existing provisions in this area, which were strengthened in 1991, but I will be glad to review their effectiveness in the light of any particular transaction which the hon. Member has in mind.

Tax-immune Foreigners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the estimated numbers of tax-immune foreigners in the United Kingdom for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: On the assumption that this refers to individuals who are liable for tax in this country only on their overseas income and gains to the extent that they are remitted here, I am afraid that information is not available on which to base an estimate.

VAT

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he makes of the numbers of businesses in East Anglia which will be helped by the value added tax administrative changes he announced in the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The VAT administrative changes announced in the Budget are generally beneficial to businesses, especially small businesses, which have welcomed them warmly. They can be expected to help many of the 80,000 businesses registered for VAT in East Anglia.

Petroleum Revenue Tax

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect he expects his changes to petroleum revenue tax announced in the Budget to have on the gas and oil industries both onshore and offshore in the southern North sea sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: To the extent that existing production in the southern basin is within the charge to petroleum revenue tax, doubling the investors' marginal share of profit should encourage investment in, and extend the life of, fields. Removing the burden of PRT from fields currently without development consent will both increase after-tax costs and increase after-tax profits that would have been subject to PRT, so companies will have greater incentives to undertake commercially-viable investment.

The measure involving a small change to PRT, but principally ending liability to gas levy in certain circumstances, is a direct response to an industry request and should remove a disincentive to significant further production. Taken together, those measures clearly improve incentives for development investment, which should prove beneficial to the offshore industry and its onshore support.

ECOFIN

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Chelmsford of 18 March, *Official Report*, columns 327-8, what were the voting figures for each member state recorded in the meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council held on 15 March.

Sir John Cope: No formal votes were taken at the meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council on 15 March. There was no opposition to the agreements reported in the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 18 March at column *327-8*.

Paymaster General's Office

Sir Peter Hordern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the future of the Paymaster General's Office; and what key targets have been set for 1993-94.

Sir John Cope: The Paymaster General's Office will become a next steps agency with effect from 1 April 1993. Copies of the Paymaster General's office framework document and abridged versions of the corporate and business plans have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I have set the Paymaster General's Office the following key targets for 1993-94:

1. *Meeting customers' requirements*
   - 1.1 Respond to 85 per cent. of pensions correspondence and process associated amendments within five working days of receipt and the remainder within 20 working days of receipt.
   - 1.2 Process 98 per cent. of pensions amendments without error.
   - 1.3 Meet the banking transaction timetable, agreed with customers, 95 per cent. of the time and never exceed the timetable by more than one day.
   - 1.4 Develop a quality indicator for the banking service by 31 March 1994.
   - 1.5 Meet the agreed timetable, for sending financial information to the Treasury, 95 per cent. of the time and never exceed the timetable by more than one day.

2. *Recovery of full costs*
   Recover the full costs of running the agency, except for banking and allied services.

3. *Reduction in unit costs*
   - 3.1 Reduce by 1 per cent., over the year, the average unit cost (in real terms) of paying a pension.
   - 3.2 Obtain a 1 per cent. improvement, over the year, in the average unit costs index for processing banking transactions.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many changes to council tax banding valuations have so far been allowed by the Valuation Agency in advance of the general appeals period of 1 April to 30 November; what is the total number of such changes expected to have been processed by 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 23 March 1993]:* The total number of changes to the draft valuation lists since they were deposited with billing authorities in early December 1992 to the end of February 1993 is 174,236 in England and Wales. It is estimated that some 200,000 changes may have been made by 1 April 1993.

Amendments to the draft valuation lists result from both notification of the listing officers by the billing authorities of changes to existing, new or demolished dwellings, and from inquiries from the public following the publication of the draft valuation list.

No statistics are available to distinguish between the number of changes made following notification from billing authorities and inquiries from the public.

GDP

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table showing the gross domestic product of each region since 1987-88 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The latest available information was published in the December 1992 issue of "Economic Trends", a copy of which is available in the Library. Regional gross domestic product figures are calculated only at current prices, as there are no regional price deflators available.

Care Homes

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that the viability of registered care homes affording generalist provision for single homeless people is not put at risk by the implementation of the community care legislation on 1 April.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

From 1 April local social services authorities will be responsible for arranging residential care for people who need it, whether or not they have a settled way of life. The money that the Department of Social Security would have spent supporting single homeless people in residential care homes is included within the resources being transferred to local authorities. We have made clear in guidance authorities' responsibilities for this group of people. It is for authorities themselves to decide how they spend their resources.

HEALTH

Charitable Trust Funds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *280*, if she is now able to provide details from 1991-92 accounts of charity trust fund balances; and if she will state by health authority and health trust in England the charitable trust fund *(a)* income, *(b)* expenditure and *(c)* fund balances at 31 March 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table.

NHS charitable trust funds 1991-92

	Total income £	*Total expenditure* £	*Total capital reserves as at 31 March 1992* £
Northern RHA	37,306	40,191	403,196
Hartlepool	106,680	93,092	218,955
North Tees	437,063	252,459	690,772
South Tees	1,361,321	540,624	1,660,114
East Cumbria	478,407	454,056	1,179,052
South Cumbria	419,508	594,992	610,198
West Cumbria	424,106	226,497	634,757
Darlington	303,816	224,549	1,424,155
Durham	157,483	164,286	328,469
North West Durham	134,721	103,750	213,704
South West Durham	285,780	310,688	444,080
Northumberland	501,013	851,363	1,353,052
Gateshead	154,080	159,520	314,886
North Tyneside	160,968	96,518	337,500
South Tyneside	224,749	145,990	246,296
Sunderland	856,824	781,244	1,193,623
Northern Region Total	6,043,625	5,017,799	11,252,807
Yorkshire RHA	207,883	152,013	947,645
Hull	558,608	442,629	1,256,433
East Yorkshire	392,129	372,860	463,235
Grimsby	161,957	146,860	301,702
Scunthorpe	228,647	255,250	359,127
Northallerton	192,221	141,542	426,904
York	573,691	443,939	1,212,757
Scarborough	468,155	364,286	757,150
Harrogate	356,752	470,425	1,451,158
Bradford	498,703	371,582	1,410,426
Airedale	394,097	316,628	709,376
Calderdale	133,615	83,650	497,277
Huddersfield	322,379	384,050	1,177,623
Dewsbury	230,202	282,470	217,642
Leeds	514,575	354,551	2,001,180
Wakefield	643,714	533,187	877,239
Pontefract	219,748	115,499	409,163
Yorkshire Region Total	6,097,076	5,211,421	14,476,039
Trent RHA	34,040	23,584	509,924
North Derbyshire	884,179	540,776	1,642,598
South Derbyshire	1,317,684	1,244,573	3,874,527
Leicestershire	2,385,040	2,101,954	6,596,662
North Lincolnshire	410,378	345,853	948,273

	Total income	Total expenditure	Total capital reserves as at 31 March 1992
	£	£	£
South Lincolnshire	348,645	210,604	987,781
Bassetlaw	161,202	143,261	234,439
Central Nottinghamshire	672,413	1,341,974	1,621,621
Nottingham	1,013,890	995,400	2,235,123
Barnsley	381,336	333,961	1,053,878
Doncaster	264,516	207,109	482,289
Rotherham	463,253	437,732	895,723
Sheffield	2,489,582	1,828,328	3,780,100
Trent Region Total	10,826,158	9,755,109	24,862,938
East Anglian RHA	86,399	49,407	171,291
Cambridge	1,656,888	1,745,798	4,259,125
Peterborough	1,480,153	593,730	1,902,037
West Suffolk	498,942	477,985	1,060,531
East Suffolk	913,719	920,221	1,477,756
Norwich	1,571,675	1,297,252	6,711,654
Great Yarmouth	669,315	731,857	1,631,660
West Norfolk and Wisbech	408,365	310,410	1,000,624
Huntingdon	1,093,261	1,076,424	1,498,515
East Anglian Region Total	8,378,717	7,203,084	19,713,193
North West Thames RHA	111,798	27,004	1,245,835
North Bedfordshire	249,713	217,778	802,777
South Bedfordshire	772,149	604,874	6,850,728
East Hertfordshire	193,381	180,722	294,380
North West Hertfordshire	583,005	558,499	1,680,343
South West Hertfordshire	411,023	372,809	1,497,304
Barnet	371,483	416,828	590,186
Barrow	699,846	548,051	1,135,659
Hillingdon	1,065,270	1,176,775	769,209
Hounslow and Spelthorne	519,201	572,708	1,027,077
Ealing	397,435	130,349	701,378
Riverside	204,175	319,226	252,854
Parkside	207,403	137,882	1,836,191
North West Thames Region Total	5,785,882	5,263,499	18,683,921
North East Thames RHA	75,159	16,131	504,163
Basildon	434,192	312,971	767,349
Mid Essex	396,138	295,402	843,785
North East Essex	402,591	307,383	1,766,061
West Essex	629,719	502,043	824,518
Southend	51,743	48,862	247,349
Barking/Havering/Brentwood	714,838	504,726	1,219,804
Hampstead	114,203	65,883	272,762
City and Hackney	573,430	308,745	993,951
Newham	245,627	215,530	853,704
Enfield	124,721	139,893	66,758
Haringey	44,900	29,207	149,748
Redbridge	409,154	472,264	513,256
Waltham Forest	553,165	566,247	1,065,486
Bloomsbury and Islington	695,909	621,839	4,904,533
North East Thames Region Total	5,465,489	4,507,126	14,993,227
South East Thames RHA	906,531	752,925	2,536,377
Brighton	1,442,387	1,362,934	2,786,429
Eastbourne	732,093	1,415,860	5,539,408
Hastings	369,551	257,679	625,829
South East Kent	506,903	460,096	669,241
Canterbury and Thanet	1,174,349	1,116,324	1,960,503
Dartford and Gravesham	280,085	229,967	763,769
Maidstone	289,108	261,487	859,826
Medway	311,436	407,419	1,045,818
Tunbridge Wells	522,351	480,926	1,312,682
Bexley	425,864	390,513	802,547
Greenwich	568,170	1,097,213	2,190,993
Bromley	828,636	675,352	831,991
Lewisham and Southwark	70,941	15,874	716,047
South East Thames Region Total	8,430,405	8,924,569	22,641,460
South West Thames RHA	80,459	143,490	515,738

	Total income	Total expenditure	Total capital reserves as at 31 March 1992
	£	£	£
North West Surrey	453,013	343,897	1,790,050
West Surrey/North East Hampshire	404,856	593,280	554,588
South West Surrey	570,403	515,087	1,577,867
Mid Surrey	210,262	181,868	494,854
East Surrey	804,419	712,467	1,239,190
Chichester	268,248	298,155	967,636
Mid Downs	326,388	243,763	1,280,200
Worthing	391,143	237,407	471,864
Croydon	311,344	195,399	1,506,654
Kingston & Esher	175,725	135,138	635,492
Richmond Twickenham & Roehampton	76,882	32,085	436,708
Wandsworth	242,218	215,462	1,770,282
Sutton & Merton	194,179	83,322	1,279,995
South West Region Total	4,509,539	3,930,821	14,501,118
Wessex RHA	89,580	40,802	1,054,546
East Dorset	1,422,407	1,224,539	3,590,101
West Dorset	32,592	—	351,629
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire	1,621,902	1,292,554	4,509,323
Southampton & South West Hampshire	3,174,357	2,130,265	2,837,002
Winchester	627,546	586,406	1,238,502
Basingstoke & North Hampshire	354,013	292,739	1,042,287
Salisbury	958,418	831,538	3,205,956
Swindon	845,234	600,982	1,957,911
Bath	1,133,723	1,190,861	1,406,638
Isle of Wight	661,296	392,068	1,297,421
Wessex Region Total	10,921,068	8,582,754	22,491,316
Oxford RHA	27,216	64,192	298,431
East Berkshire	426,456	299,798	691,493
West Berkshire	847,828	778,377	1,614,048
Aylesbury	1,411,488	1,058,712	1,579,347
Wycombe	763,232	564,361	868,238
Milton Keynes	304,841	220,298	426,241
Kettering	1,079,692	883,447	1,114,259
Northampton	892,045	805,532	2,477,647
Oxford	5,731,653	4,313,476	10,865,195
Oxford Region Total	11,484,451	8,988,193	19,934,899
South Western RHA	39,664	30,918	261,857
Bristol & District	1,616,399	1,504,247	3,960,984
Cornwall	616,791	555,687	927,229
Exeter	979,456	938,904	1,433,056
North Devon	18,397	46,721	83,350
Plymouth	983,032	893,916	1,723,576
Cheltenham	1,817	425	13,887
Gloucester	1,179,012	942,596	1,264,001
Somerset	604,312	639,672	1,375,488
South Western Region Total	6,038,880	5,553,086	11,043,428
West Midlands RHA	169,765	156,024	614,697
Bromsgrove	151,642	161,477	405,932
Hereford	1,195,477	531,675	1,671,876
Kidderminster	230,127	220,035	458,164
Worcester	338,387	387,657	766,632
Salop	1,471,418	1,317,795	2,142,910
Mid Staffordshire	580,959	865,940	1,067,287
North Staffordshire	961,983	787,667	3,432,627
South East Staffordshire	301,693	181,352	1,173,033
South Warwickshire	907,294	336,689	1,482,508
East Birmingham	1,303,629	1,113,730	2,020,685
North Birmingham	612,983	616,310	686,609
West Birmingham	1,378,453	1,182,094	2,374,635
Coventry	959,605	976,002	1,629,905
Dudley	798,466	882,845	1,536,450
Sandwell	345,526	352,015	612,673
Solihull	228,988	253,784	934,185
Walsall	80,158	92,877	161,436
Wolverhampton	480,452	617,537	1,358,510
North East Warwickshire	416,405	308,520	786,468
South Birmingham	1,222,234	853,961	1,926,344

	Total income	Total expenditure	Total capital reserves as at 31 March 1992
	£	£	£
West Midlands Region Total	14,131,744	11,695,766	27,243,566
Mersey RHA	1,125,689	52,744	1,470,317
Chester	258,632	213,431	632,182
Crewe	305,653	376,872	828,133
Halton	58,051	61,688	88,688
Macclesfield	219,557	230,881	582,909
Warrington	161,968	167,061	259,537
St. Helens and Knowsley	441,380	453,314	717,885
Southport and Formby	219,900	353,182	433,402
South Sefton	573,009	359,988	1,230,314
Wirral	1,186,835	616,349	2,399,798
Mersey Region Total	4,550,674	2,885,510	8,643,165
North Western RHA	56,201	10,042	600,220
Lancaster	497,805	453,060	683,320
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	930,311	959,527	1,362,766
Preston	732,498	369,563	1,457,944
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	456,047	404,571	2,165,241
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	363,963	299,096	711,806
West Lancashire	266,891	299,815	442,433
Chorley and South Ribble	66,625	81,190	102,901
Bolton	278,822	863,022	393,830
Bury	170,004	140,173	316,288
North Manchester	299,778	255,683	1,267,790
Central Manchester	149	152	(4)
South Manchester	3,162,853	2,993,118	4,318,515
Oldham	323,427	247,811	614,962
Rochdale	204,434	155,158	490,647
Salford	2,623,689	2,345,722	3,333,114
Stockport	472,128	430,431	886,384
Tameside and Glossop	395,682	387,403	1,031,041
Trafford	349,161	258,370	649,835
Wigan	327,395	360,824	666,380
North Western Region Total	11,977,863	10,814,731	21,495,399
St. Bartholomew's	8,745,436	9,326,739	61,594,568
London Hospital	4,472,814	3,844,624	17,657,547
Royal Free Hospital	4,367,877	3,989,874	10,900,046
University College Hospital	1,596,300	1,026,716	6,694,888
Middlesex Hospital	3,143,572	5,080,477	11,855,573
Charing Cross Hospital	1,415,906	1,433,516	6,762,681
St. George's Hospital	1,983,204	1,490,294	9,287,827
Westminster Hospital	1,366,459	1,176,170	9,793,011
St. Mary's Hospital	1,551,427	833,069	15,768,335
Guy's Hospital	12,517,034	16,917,995	47,308,026
King's College Hospital	1,942,221	2,189,175	8,897,575
St. Thomas's Hospital	16,782,339	11,651,260	69,882,489
Hammersmith Hospital	1,303,197	1,277,862	4,689,652
Leeds Teaching Hospital	860,062	993,816	4,754,133
Sheffield	895,600	1,015,691	8,141,192
Bristol	1,864,038	2,033,252	7,935,074
Birmingham	6,648,450	6,485,447	16,397,762
Newcastle University	1,102,572	560,816	8,745,826
Nottingham University	993,131	964,845	3,298,771
Royal National Throat/Nose/Ear Hospital	133,643	100,483	1,435,747
Moorfields	1,311,054	391,958	8,232,011
St. Peters	141,429	645,524	377,709
Hospital for Sick Children	15,372,597	8,004,541	28,309,099
Queen Charlottes	948,420	680,529	2,342,604
Special Trustees Total	91,458,762	82,094,673	371,062,144
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	905,112	3,093,876	2,335,233
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospital	2,179,543	2,627,744	20,682,594
Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospital	3,084,856	6,654,076	3,876,225
Royal Marsden Hospital	5,468,010	5,219,346	17,275,264
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte	14,032	5,011	137,897
Eastman Dental Hospital	23,706	609	46,335
Special Health Authority Total	11,675,259	17,600,662	44,333,548

	Total income £	Total expenditure £	Total capital reserves as at 31 March 1992 £
The Freeman group of hospitals NHS trust	815,564	577,970	1,504,696
Leeds General Infirmary and Associated hospitals trust	805,251	424,913	1,416,119
St. James' University hospital trust	985,479	402,819	2,724,866
Northern General hospital Sheffield NHS trust	741,109	571,535	980,324
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu hospital Mexborough trust	568,220	280,213	763,244
Anglian Harbours NHS trust	827,847	57,662	730,434
Southend Health Care Services trust	572,734	560,936	997,977
London hospital and associated community services trust	43,411	20,676	322,521
North Middlesex hospital NHS trust	76,905	90,424	265,962
North Hertfordshire NHS trust	668,885	134,004	1,868,972
Mount Vernon hospital NHS trust	482,593	457,437	637,833
Hillingdon hospital NHS trust	536,657	707,406	549,429
Central Middlesex hospital	352,216	338,864	599,298
Lifecare trust	35,807	50,012	123,751
Kingston hospital NHS trust	357,038	219,235	1,149,789
The Homewood NHS trust	92,225	64,431	141,540
St. Helier NHS trust	255,941	225,650	1,122,580
Croydon Community Health trust	6,722	8,080	12,018
Epsom Healthcare trust	295,058	190,118	389,057
Weston area health trust	346,859	463,648	696,249
East Gloucestershire NHS trust	593,435	479,897	1,284,136
Cornwall Community Healthcare trust	249,628	276,630	238,126
United Bristol Healthcare trust	154,329	292,353	935,645
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly mental handicap services trust	10,307	7,339	32,090
South Devon Healthcare NHS trust	728,297	1,125,933	933,802
The Royal National hospital for Rheumatic diseases trust	121,973	31,158	166,867
West Dorset mental health services trust	7,674	12,642	(4,968)
West Dorset community services trust	79,000	53,000	14,000
Nuffield orthopaedic centre NHS trust	79,054	80,721	260,320
First community health trust	19,710	7,411	39,393
Mid Staffordshire mental health trust	10,128	10,892	68,235
The Rugby NHS trust	77,294	50,932	274,617
The Walsall hospitals trust	341,324	287,489	642,080
St. Helens and Knowsley hospital services trust	415,097	421,530	618,762
Cheshire and Halton community trust	7,170	5,552	13,815
Central Manchester NHS trust	3,047,234	2,124,033	5,969,491
Christie hospital trust	10,190,119	9,622,729	11,293,851
Lincolnshire ambulance service and health transport service trust	15,033	2,158	26,359
North Devon Healthcare trust	580,872	701,992	1,604,685
NHS Trust Totals	24,889,781	21,040,204	41,407,965

Sources:

(a) 1991-92 annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England together with those of special trustees and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

(b) 1991-92 annual accounts of first wave NHS trusts in England.

Notes:

1. The figures are provisional in that they are subject to audit by the National Audit Office.
2. The figures of total income do not include gifts, donations and legacies of capital to be held in perpetuity. These receipts are, however, reflected in the total capital reserves which include the balances of funds to be held in perpetuity and represent the excess of the total assets (ie. property, investments, stock, debtors and cash) over the total liabilities (mainly creditors).
3. A number of health authorities do not include statements for NHS charitable trust funds within their annual accounts as their funds are separately managed and accounted for by special trustees. Similarly, during 1991-92 some district health authorities and first wave NHS trusts deferred the transfer of responsibility for manageing and accounting for relevant charitable funds.

Health Promotion Clinics

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health promotion clinics were functioning at 1 June 1992; and if she will list their cost and a breakdown of the various services and therapies being provided through those clinics at that time.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the number of clinics as at 1 June 1992 was not collected centrally. The number of claims made by partnerships in England for health promotion clinic sessions for the year ending 1 April 1992 was 1,331,277. The forecast total expenditure on health promotion clinics for the 1992-93 financial year is £74·448 million.

There is no central breakdown of the services and therapies provided through health promotion clinics.

Complementary Therapies

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the standards, qualifications and levels of competence of GPs providing extra services in the form of one or more of the non-conventional/complementary therapies are assessed and monitored; and by whom.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioners are required by their terms of service to render all necessary and appropriate medical services to their patients. When GPs provide services personally it is for them to ensure that they are appropriately qualified and competent to do so. GPs are responsible for the actions of staff they employ and their terms of service require them to be satisfied that employees are appropriately qualified and competent. GPs can obtain advice on qualifications and competence from their family health services authorities or the relevant associations which represent a particular complementary therapy.

Foot Surgery

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost to the national health service of providing foot surgery; and what assessment has been made of the effect on this of imposing value added tax on children's footwear.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Value added tax is not charged on young children's footwear.

Hepatitis B

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about the cost to the NHS of screening a patient for hepatitis B.

Mr. Sackville: Such costs vary between laboratories. The cost of materials for a basic screen is about £4, and a final cost including overheads is likely to be between £10 and £20.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were found to be positive for hepatitis B antigen following screening as a result of being treated by the surgeon in Stafford.

Mr. Sackville: In addition to the original case at Stafford which led to the investigations, one further patient has been found at Stafford with evidence of recent hepatitis B infection, together with several others who show evidence of hepatitis B in their past history. Investigations are continuing to determine whether any of these infections can be shown to be linked to hospital treatment.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of recall of patients for hepatitis B screening treated by the surgeon in Stafford, both at his current and previous hospitals of employment.

Mr. Sackville: I understand the estimated cost to date of screening patients from Stafford district general hospital is £1,100.

The cost of screening patients from the Crosshouse hospital in Kilmarnock and the Ayrshire central hospital in Irvine is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to offer compensation to patients who have acquired hepatitis from their surgeons.

Mr. Sackville: None. Compensation in relation to alleged failures in hospital treatment is a matter to be considered by the relevant health authority or trust.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to the number and percentage of surgeons who have been vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 24 March at column *619*.

Angina

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the conclusion published in 1992 in her Department's "Health Trends" that waiting time of up to six months was acceptable for surgical treatment of angina remains Government policy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's policy is that provision of cardiac services is the responsibility of health authorities taking account of local health needs and it is the responsibility of clinicians to determine the priority of treatment for patients in their care. Articles in "Health Trends" represent the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department.

Eileen House

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column *437*, how many beds there are in the small flat at Eileen house; if she will list the other major items of furniture there; who is allowed access to the flat; and how much was spent refurbishing the flat.

Mr. Sackville: The flat is used as offices and contains office furniture: desks, seats and file storage units. It contains no beds. Departmental staff have access to these offices, which have not been refurbished.

London Implementation Group

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list a full timetable for the work of the London implementation group on *(a)* changes to acute services and *(b)* the review of individual specialities; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will make a statement on the progress being made by the London implementation group on the future of *(a)* the Royal Brompton hospital, *(b)* the Royal Marsden hospital, *(c)* the Charing Cross hospital, *(d)* Queen Charlotte's hospital, *(e)* the Royal National throat, nose and ear hospital and *(f)* the hospital for tropical diseases.

Dr. Mawhinney: The timetable for planning change in the inner-London acute sector was set out in our policy document "Making London Better". We have asked the London implementation group, working with the Thames regional health authorities and local purchasers and providers, to take forward the necessary studies, option appraisals and consultations according to this timetable.

Primary Care (London)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list a detailed breakdown of the distribution of the funds for 1993-94 proposed for the improvement of primary care in London in her document, "Making London Better"; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: £40 million is available for primary care capital and revenue developments in the London initiative zone 1993-94. Local proposals for using these funds have been developed under the guidance of the Thames regions and will be considered by the London implementation group's primary health care forum.

Applications have been invited against the sum of £7·5 million over three years available for voluntary sector developments in the LIZ area. Initial applications are expected by the end of April and will be considered by the Primary Health Care Forum. Further details of the arrangements for the London primary health care challenge fund will be published shortly.

Electoral Roll (Newbury)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 March, what are the district councils which cover part or all of the parliamentary constituency of Newbury; what are the latest available estimates from the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years for those district council areas; and what are their equivalent electoral registration figures.

Mr. Sackville: The Newbury parliamentary constituency comprises most of Newbury district (with 81,106 of the total of 105,336 parliamentary electors on the 1993 registers) and a small part of Basingstoke and Deane district (with 833 of the 111,452 parliamentary electors in 1993), this information is shown in the table. The latest population estimates available relate to mid-1991. The estimates for residents aged 17 and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16, at that date are 108,900 in the whole of Newbury district and 114,600 in the whole of Basingstoke and Deane district.

Parliamentary electors

	Ward electorates			
	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*Present constituency*
Newbury district[1]	103,388	104,466	105,336	
1. Aldermaston	725	719	716	Newbury CC
2. Basildon	1,820	1,859	1,848	Newbury CC
	167	166	163	Reading West CC
	1,987	2,025	2,011	
3. Beenham	2,090	2,069	2,081	Newbury CC
4. Bradfield	1,749	1,776	1,814	Newbury CC
	65	80	89	Reading West CC
	1,814	1,856	1,903	
5. Bucklebury	1,558	1,578	1,605	Newbury CC
6. Burghfield	5,026	5,077	5,107	Newbury CC
	6	6	7	Reading West CC
	5,032	5,083	5,114	
7. Calcot	2,380	2,381	2,430	Reading West CC
8. Chieveley	2,123	2,265	2,383	Newbury CC
9. Cold Ash	3,018	3,049	3,076	Newbury CC
10. Compton	2,575	2,603	2,652	Newbury CC
11. Craven	4,261	4,307	4,400	Newbury CC
12. Downlands	1,797	1,783	1,788	Newbury CC
13. Falkland	4,561	4,577	4,563	Newbury CC
14. Greenham	1,617	1,607	1,584	Newbury CC
15. Hungerford	4,888	4,937	4,953	Newbury CC
16. Kintbury	2,584	2,612	2,643	Newbury CC
17. Lambourn Valley	4	3	3	Devizes CC
	3,966	4,104	4,164	Newbury CC
	3,970	4,107	4,167	
18. Mortimer	219	207	220	Basingstoke CC
	3,604	3,616	3,643	Newbury CC
	3,823	3,823	3,863	
19. Northcroft	1,925	2,027	2,019	Newbury CC
20. Pangbourne	4	5	5	Henley CC
	2,552	2,581	2,596	Reading West CC
	2,556	2,586	2,601	
21. Purley	2,954	3,065	3,067	Reading West CC
22. St. John's	5,385	5,339	5,338	Newbury CC
23. Shaw-cum-Donnington	1,293	1,272	1,304	Newbury CC
24. Speen	2,525	2,548	2,585	Newbury CC
25. Thatcham North	3,479	3,464	3,524	Newbury CC

	Ward electorates 1991	1992	1993	Present constituency
26. Thatcham South	7,028	7,149	7,273	Newbury CC
27. Thatcham West	4,333	4,319	4,342	Newbury CC
28. Theale	0	15	16	Newbury CC
	7,224	7,406	7,407	Reading West CC
	7,224	7,421	7,423	
29. Tilehurst	8,319	8,248	8,243	Reading West CC
30. Turnpike	2,459	2,530	2,555	Newbury CC
31. Winchcombe	3,105	3,117	3,130	Newbury CC
Basingstoke CC (pt)	219	207	220	
Devizes CC (pt)	4	3	3	
Henley CC (pt)	4	5	5	
Newbury CC (pt)	79,494	80,318	81,106	
Reading West CC (pt)	23,667	23,933	24,002	
Basingstoke and Deane borough[2]	110,103	111,625	111,452	
1. Basing	5,802	5,836	5,804	Basingstoke CC
2. Baughurst and Heath End	669	661	610	Newbury CC
	3,376	3,384	3,407	North West Hampshire CC
	4,045	4,045	4,017	
3. Brighton Hill	6,221	6,367	6,310	Basingstoke CC
4. Brookvale	4,280	4,341	4,290	Basingstoke CC
5. Buckskin	4,552	4,375	4,304	Basingstoke CC
6. Burghclere	1,903	1,948	1,904	North West Hampshire CC
7. Calleva	6,120	6,382	6,437	Basingstoke CC
	237	232	223	Newbury CC
	6,357	6,614	6,660	
8. Chineham	4,277	4,459	4,611	Basingstoke CC
9. Eastrop	3,593	3,574	3,601	Basingstoke CC
10. East Woodhay	1,924	1,970	1,964	North West Hampshire CC
11. Grove	4,451	4,403	4,356	Basingstoke CC
12. Hatch Warren	4,399	4,920	5,333	Basingstoke CC
13. Highclere and Bourne	2,286	2,300	2,295	North West Hampshire CC
14. Kempshott	5,671	5,725	5,666	Basingstoke CC
15. Kingsclere	3,934	3,963	3,949	North West Hampshire CC
16. Norden	5,339	5,457	5,377	Basingstoke CC
17. Oakley and North Waltham	5,790	5,811	5,793	Basingstoke CC
18. Overton and Laverstoke	3,234	3,283	3,294	North West Hampshire CC
19. Popley	6,661	6,605	6,507	Basingstoke CC
20. Sherborne St. John	1,846	2,017	2,011	Basingstoke CC
21. South Ham	5,849	5,756	5,671	Basingstoke CC
22. Tadley	6,230	6,374	6,368	North West Hampshire CC
23. Upton Grey	2,081	2,142	2,141	Basingstoke CC
24. Whitchurch	3,604	3,613	3,587	North West Hampshire CC
25. Winklebury	5,774	5,727	5,639	Basingstoke CC
Basingstoke CC (pt)	82,706	83,897	83,851	
Newbury CC (pt)	906	893	833	
North West Hampshire CC (pt)	26,491	26,835	26,768	

[1] As altered by The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey (County Boundaries) Order 1991 and The Newbury (Parishes) Order 1991.

[2] As altered by The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey (County Boundaries) Order 1991 and the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1992.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities existed in 1980-81, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; how many she expects to exist by the end of 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities were established by the National Health Service (Determination of Districts) Order 1981 (SI 81/1837). The information is shown in the table.

Number of District Health Authorities in England

Date	Number
1981 (number established)	192
April 1990	190
April 1991	186
April 1992	178
March 1993 (current)	173

We cannot anticipate the outcome of merger proposals currently in hand, but if current proposals are agreed there will be 140 DHAs by March 1994.

We will continue to consider merger proposals where they are in the interests of patients.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state for each district health authority in the four Thames regions *(a)* the revenue outturn for 1982-83, *(b)* the revenue outturn for 1991-92 in cash terms, *(c)* the revenue outturn for 1991-92 adjusted using the NHS pay and price index, *(d)* the 1992-93 revenue allocation including capital charge compensation, *(e)* the 1992-93 allocation excluding capital charge compensation and *(f)* the percentage difference between *(a)* and *(e)* adjusted using the NHS pay and price index.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 22 February 1993]:* The tables give for each district in the Thames regions the revenue outturn for 1982-83 and 1991-92 (derived from the published accounts) and the 1991-92 outturn at 1982-83 prices using the GDP deflator. The national health service pay and price index for 1991-92 is not yet available.

Information on the 1992-93 allocations to districts, which will be the final cash limits for the financial year, is not held centrally.

	Revenue outturn 1982-83 (at 1982-83 cash)	*Revenue outturn 1991-92 (at 1991-92 cash)*	*Revenue outturn 1991-92 (at 1982-83 cash)*
North West Thames RHA	20,335,775	57,619,199	34,649,828
North Bedfordshire	29,878,953	71,656,022	43,090,999
South Bedfordshire	30,796,203	86,066,794	51,757,047
North Hertfordshire	19,771,127	59,288,222	35,653,510
East Hertfordshire	24,926,353	88,002,384	52,921,032
North West Hertfordshire	42,483,433	102,570,343	61,681,606
South West Hertfordshire	32,795,331	87,009,205	52,323,775
Barnet	59,776,548	130,730,177	78,615,778
Harrow	34,701,218	88,397,307	53,158,522
Hillingdon	46,374,090	83,518,302	50,224,489
Hounslow and Spelthorne	45,496,873	107,625,179	64,721,378
Ealing	34,522,021	103,110,478	62,006,421
Brent	44,982,791	—	—
Paddington	54,116,453	—	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	44,470,597	—	—
Victoria	67,787,606	—	—
Riverside	—	186,629,392	112,231,278
Parkside	—	238,303,679	143,306,079
North West Thames Regional Total	633,215,372	1,490,526,683	896,341,742
North East Thames RHA	22,442,080	189,715,331	114,087,035
Basildon and Thurrock	42,406,907	89,539,073	53,845,134
Mid Essex	35,554,483	93,892,755	56,463,260
North East Essex	48,242,241	103,239,520	62,084,022
West Essex	29,864,213	84,477,676	50,801,417
Southend	35,084,701	91,034,599	54,744,482
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	62,219,351	153,568,011	92,349,517
Hampstead	58,524,732	60,483,821	36,372,494
City and Hackney	70,790,662	107,363,560	64,564,051
Newham	30,612,895	99,756,200	59,989,296
Tower Hamlets	60,463,479	80,426,175	48,365,010
Enfield	30,392,333	96,196,452	57,848,609
Haringey	36,483,041	92,736,373	55,767,859
Redbridge	32,057,915	88,194,556	53,036,596
Waltham Forest	55,667,325	96,763,754	58,189,761
Bloomsbury	107,685,280	—	—
Islington	42,185,088	—	—
Bloomsbury and Islington	—	178,471,140	107,325,239
North East Thames Regional Total	800,676,726	1,705,858,996	1,025,833,782
South East Thames RHA	19,143,996	250,032,280	150,359,180
Brighton	45,101,687	104,263,976	62,700,088
Eastbourne	34,656,520	89,229,769	53,659,131
Hastings	23,460,289	58,655,280	35,272,885
South East Kent	28,198,300	83,818,882	50,405,245
Canterbury and Thanet	49,788,466	102,041,685	61,363,693
Dartford and Gravesham	39,709,671	74,250,536	44,651,233
Maidstone	29,480,820	60,676,123	36,488,137
Medway	36,446,695	92,556,936	55,659,953
Tunbridge Wells	38,849,110	60,611,414	36,449,224
Bexley	30,536,484	71,303,254	42,878,859
Greenwich	54,158,630	91,659,692	55,120,387
Bromley	47,947,516	110,819,831	66,642,511
West Lambeth	70,519,544	88,371,499	53,143,003
Camberwell	57,456,272	84,269,767	50,676,389
Lewisham and North Southwark	94,966,664	145,155,564	87,290,615
South East Thames Regional Total	700,420,664	1,567,716,488	942,760,533
South West Thames RHA	15,748,269	149,076,547	89,648,534
North West Surrey	32,060,211	72,956,823	43,873,247

	Revenue outturn 1982-83 (at 1982-83 cash)	Revenue outturn 1991-92 (at 1991-92 cash)	Revenue outturn 1991-92 (at 1982-83 cash)
West Surrey and North East Hants	31,626,605	75,794,712	45,579,838
South West Surrey	29,056,845	67,946,908	40,860,490
Mid Surrey	36,006,038	62,977,286	37,871,962
East Surrey	41,247,221	72,024,210	43,312,412
Chichester	25,000,995	60,116,349	36,151,512
Mid Downs	36,279,451	87,040,435	52,342,555
Worthing	26,365,689	82,473,837	49,596,390
Croydon	50,933,963	109,082,512	65,597,758
Kingston and Esher	35,913,579	68,653,248	41,285,253
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	30,778,431	96,517,808	58,041,859
Wandsworth	80,822,843	104,631,717	62,921,232
Sutton and Merton	58,552,912	132,302,204	79,561,131
South West Thames Regional Total	530,393,053	1,241,594,596	746,644,173

Radon Gas

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to assess the dangers arising from radon gas concentrations in dwellings; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are advised on the risks of exposure to radon in the home by the National Radiological Protection Board, which has recommended action levels for exposure. The board's latest advice was endorsed by the independent advisory Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Envvironment, and has been accepted by Government. The Department is currently supporting a comprehensive case-control study of the incidence of lung cancer in the areas of the United Kingdom with the highest levels of radon in homes. The situation is being kept under close review.

NHS Administrators

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the numbers of administrators/ management employed in each regional health authority, district health authority and family health services authority, in England and Wales.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* The information requested for England is shown in the table. Sub-regional figures for 1991 are not available centrally. The figures for 1991 (the latest year for which figures are available) include staff in national health service trusts. Information on Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Administrative and clerical managerial grades, by regional health authority, England 1991

	Administrative and clerical	General and senior managers
Northern	7,240	720
Yorkshire	8,090	1,130
Trent	10,540	810
East Anglian	4,550	560
North West Thames	8,660	680
North East Thames	11,050	1,310
South East Thames	10,800	980
South West Thames	6,590	650
Wessex	6,190	850
Oxford	4,930	520
South Western	7,680	780
West Midlands	12,740	1,440
Mersey	6,160	730
North Western	11,220	990
SHAs	2,390	290
Others	8,560	910
ENGLAND	127,370	13,340

Administrative and clerical and managerial grades, by RHA and DHA, England 1990

	Administrative and clerical	General and senior managers
ENGLAND TOTAL	120,040	9,680
Northern RHA	6,940	550
Yorkshire RHA	7,870	930
Trent RHA	10,120	600
East Anglian RHA	4,070	480
North West Thames RHA	8,160	80
North East Thames RHA	10,450	1,030
South East Thames RHA	10,030	780
South West Thames RHA	6,340	520
Wessex RHA	5,840	610
Oxford RHA	5,150	420
South Western RHA	6,980	610
West Midlands RHA	11,950	1,060
Mersey RHA	5,810	500
North Western RHA	10,070	690
Special Health Authorities	1,840	130
FHSAs	4,350	640
London Ambulance Service	90	—
Other Statutory Authorities	3,960	40
Northern RHA	6,940	550
RHA HQ and HQ Units	470	40
Hartlepool	220	10
North Tees	340	30
South Tees	690	70
East Cumbria	320	40
South Cumbria	320	40
West Cumbria	260	—
Darlington	300	20
Durham	290	20
North West Durham	170	10
South West Durham	280	20
Northumberland	490	50
Gateshead	290	20
Newcastle	1,350	80
North Tyneside	270	20
South Tyneside	240	10
Sunderland	650	70
Yorkshire RHA	7,870	930
RHA HQ and HQ Units	500	140

	Administrative and clerical	General and senior managers
Hull	670	70
East Yorkshire	340	50
Grimsby	280	30
Scunthorpe	350	10
Northallerton	150	20
York	500	50
Scarborough	240	20
Harrogate	280	40
Bradford	690	110
Airedale	320	30
Calderdale	290	20
Huddersfield	420	40
Dewsbury	270	20
Leeds	1,820	210
Wakefield	440	40
Pontefract	290	30
Trent RHA	10,120	600
RHA HQ and HQ Units	740	110
North Derbyshire	540	0
Southern Derbyshire	1,030	50
Leicestershire	1,690	80
North Lincolnshire	540	40
South Lincolnshire	490	50
Bassetlaw	170	10
Central Nottinghamshire	510	60
Nottingham	1,520	30
Barnsley	380	50
Doncaster	480	30
Rotherham	390	30
Sheffield	1,640	70
East Anglian RHA	4,070	480
RHA HQ and HQ Units	270	60
Cambridge	680	100
Peterborough	470	40
West Suffolk	390	30
East Suffolk	580	60
Norwich	770	80
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	360	50
West Norfolk and Wisbech	320	30
Huntingdon	240	40
North West Thames RHA	8,160	80
RHA HQ and HQ Units	330	10
North Bedfordshire	430	10
South Bedfordshire	440	—
North Hertfordshire	270	—
East Hertfordshire	430	—
North West Hertfordshire	620	30
South West Hertfordshire	330	10
Barnet	750	—
Harrow	420	—
Hillingdon	600	10
Hounslow and Spelthorne	670	—
Ealing	420	10
Riverside	1,220	10
Parkside	1,190	10
North East Thames RHA	10,450	1,030
RHA HQ and HQ Units	670	160
Basildon and Thurrock	520	40
Mid Essex	480	60
North East Essex	680	30
West Essex	420	60
Southend	570	60
Barking Havering and Brentwood	750	70
Hampstead	700	50
Bloomsbury	1,070	80
Islington	530	50
City and Hackney	850	60
Newham	460	40
Tower Hamlets	840	60

	Administrative and clerical	General and senior managers
Enfield	390	40
Haringey	500	40
Redbridge	400	50
Waltham Forest	640	80
South East Thames RHA	10,030	780
RHA HQ and HQ Units	600	60
Brighton	730	50
Eastbourne	460	50
Hastings	360	40
South East Kent	480	40
Canterbury and Thanet	640	50
Dartford and Gravesham	450	40
Maidstone	370	30
Medway	570	60
Tunbridge Wells	450	50
Bexley	490	40
Greenwich	650	40
Bromley	560	50
West Lambeth	880	60
Camberwell	940	40
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,400	90
South West Thames RHA	6,340	520
RHA HQ and HQ Units	640	50
North West Surrey	410	40
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	390	40
South West Surrey	450	50
Mid Surrey	350	50
East Surrey	390	40
Chichester	370	30
Mid Downs	420	40
Worthing District	410	30
Croydon	530	60
Kingston and Esher	160	30
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	320	10
Wandsworth	870	60
Merton and Sutton	620	10
Wessex RHA	5,840	610
RHA HQ and HQ Units	240	60
East Dorset	840	70
West Dorset	320	40
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	890	90
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,050	90
Winchester	340	60
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	430	40
Salisbury	310	30
Swindon	460	50
Bath District	720	70
Isle of Wight	240	10
Oxford RHA	5,150	420
RHA HQ and HQ Units	570	50
East Berkshire	560	40
West Berkshire	770	30
Aylesbury Vale	370	30
Wycombe	380	30
Milton Keynes	320	30
Kettering	350	50
Northampton	580	60
Oxfordshire	1,240	110
South Western RHA	6,980	610
RHA HQ and HQ Units	450	40
Bristol and Weston	1,180	80
Frenchay	550	40
Southmead	490	50
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	610	90

	Administrative and clerical	General and senior managers
Exeter	660	50
North Devon	270	30
Plymouth	700	40
Torbay	470	60
Cheltenham and District	350	30
Gloucester	590	60
Somerset	660	40
West Midlands RHA	11,950	1,060
RHA HQ and HQ Units	1,120	60
Bromsgrove and Redditch	300	30
Herefordshire	330	10
Kidderminster and District	230	30
Worcester and District	420	30
Shropshire	660	40
Mid Staffordshire	420	80
North Staffordshire	930	90
South East Staffordshire	440	50
Rugby	130	10
North Warwickshire	350	20
South Warwickshire	390	50
Central Birmingham	950	80
East Birmingham	490	40
North Birmingham	350	30
South Birmingham	750	50
West Birmingham	670	60
Coventry	640	80
Dudley	630	70
Sandwell	460	20
Solihull	280	50
Walsall	450	30
Wolverhampton	560	40
Mersey RHA	5,810	500
RHA HQ and HQ Units	510	50
Chester	420	30
Crewe	440	0
Halton	210	20
Macclesfield	350	20
Warrington	400	40
Liverpool	1,410	160
St Helens and Knowsley	570	50
Southport and Formby	260	40
South Sefton	560	40
Wirral	690	50
North Western RHA	10,070	690
RHA HQ and HQ Units	980	80
Lancaster	410	40
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	510	40
Preston	610	50
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	510	20
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	460	40
West Lancashire	270	30
Chorley and South Ribble	150	20
Bolton	450	30
Bury	280	20
North Manchester	640	30
Central Manchester	730	30
South Manchester	940	50
Oldham	380	20
Rochdale	310	10
Salford	700	70
Stockport	500	20
Tameside and Glossop	350	30
Trafford	370	30
Wigan	530	20
Special Health Authorities	1,840	130
Hospitals for Sick Children	290	30
Nat Hospital for Nervous Diseases	200	20
Moorfields Eye Hospital	170	—
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	160	10
National Heart and Chest	300	30
Royal Marsden Hospital	270	20
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospital	380	10
Eastman Dental Hospital	60	—
FHSA	4,350	640
Northern RHA	290	30
Yorkshire RHA	350	60
Trent RHA	350	60
East Anglian RHA	180	30
North West Thames RHA	240	30
North East Thames RHA	340	40
South East Thames RHA	340	50
South West Thames RHA	340	50
Wessex RHA	230	40
Oxford RHA	260	50
South Western RHA	270	30
West Midlands RHA	590	90
Mersey RHA	150	20
North Western RHA	430	70
London Ambulance Service	90	—
Other Statutory Authorities	3,960	40

1. Figures are in whole-time equivalents and are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. —denotes less than 5.
3. Family Health Service Authority figures for 1990 are only available as regional totals.

PRIME MINISTER

Political Parties (Funding)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what plans he has to introduce new laws relating to the organisation or funding of political parties; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will consider legislation to require political parties to make public their financial supporters.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to introduce any such legislation.

Bill of Rights

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will consider the introduction of a Bill of Rights or a written constitution during the lifetime of this Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the speeches he has made on the environment since April 1992; and what commitments he has made to additional investment in the environment.

The Prime Minister: The Government consider that environmental concerns should be reflected across the whole spectrum of policy. The environment has accordingly figured frequently in the speeches which my colleagues and I have made. The environment was central in my speech to the Earth summit at Rio in June 1992, as it was when I spoke in Birmingham last week at the global technology partnership conference.

The Chancellor's autumn statement included figures for public investment in the environment, but investment by private enterprises and individuals is even more important. Accurate figures are hard to derive, but we estimate that about 2·5 per cent. of our gross domestic product is spent directly on environmental purposes.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in the Cabinet Office are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

The Prime Minister: The figures for women employed in the Cabinet Office, including its executive agencies, are as follows:

Grades (and equivalents)	*Women*	*Total*	*Percentage women*
1	0	5	0
2	2	8	25
3	1	25	4
4	0	3	0
5	16	41	39
6	19	45	42
7	63	264	24
Overall	1,330	2,634	50

The ethnic monitoring programme was carried out on a voluntary basis and did not extend to the Cabinet Office's agencies. Of those who responded, 62 people (2·3 per cent. of the total) chose to register as non-white. One of these is at grade 7 level.

The Cabinet Office's figures on staff with disabilities include only those who have chosen to register as disabled. Twenty-eight people (1 per cent. of the total) are so registered. None is at grade 7 level or above. The Cabinet Office employs other staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register. The Cabinet Office is an equal opportunities employer, and emphasises this fact in its advertisements.

Full Employment

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column 138, what percentage of unemployment is consistent with his aim to seek full employment.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 8 March 1993 at column *392*.

South Africa

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when he was informed of the testing of nuclear devices by South Africa in the Kalahari.

The Prime Minister: We have no evidence that South Africa has conducted nuclear tests. We have noted President de Klerk's statement that South Africa never carried out a clandestine nuclear test.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister when he was informed of the existence of South Africa's nuclear bombs.

The Prime Minister: I was informed that South Africa had built six nuclear devices by President de Klerk's statement on 24 March.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *467*, what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the resumption of negotiations towards a comprehensive test ban treaty during 1993.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 22 March at column *467*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the possible contribution of the comprehensive test ban treaty towards the outcome of the non-proliferation treaty extension conference.

The Prime Minister: We believe the indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty is in the interests of all signatories. The case for its extension is strong regardless of progress towards a comprehensive test ban, and we believe it is wrong to see NPT extension as dependent on achieving a comprehensive test ban.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Scab

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will establish an independent public inquiry into effective strategies for sheep scab control in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many complaints he has received concerning the leaflet on sheep scab produced by his Department last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A number of complaints have been received about an error regarding the application of the control of substances hazardous to health regulations to the dipping operation; this is being rectified.

Integrated Administration and Control

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what rights inspectors will have to enter on to farms and demand production of records to check the accuracy of information given in connection with the integrated administration and control system.

Mr. Curry: We shall shortly be laying before the House regulations which will provide the powers of entry to farms and access to records in connection with the integrated administration and control system necessary to undertake the control procedures required to meet EC obligations.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to raise with *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* the other members of the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers the co-ordination of the integrated administration and control system for farms in each member state; and what steps he will take to ensure that British farmers are not subject to more rigorous requirements than farmers elsewhere in the EC.

Mr. Curry: At the March meeting of the Agriculture Council, my right hon. Friend emphasised that it was

crucial for the European Commission to ensure that the integrated administration and control system was implemented fully and uniformly throughout the EC.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the appropriateness of the proposed penalties as outlined in the draft booklet RSAS 4 Dec. (1) issued by his Department for late and inaccurate forms submitted in connection with the integrated administration and control system.

Mr. Curry: The penalties for late and/or inaccurate forms in connection with IACS are laid down in Community legislation and consequently apply equally in all EC member states. The IACS is intended to help control CAP expenditure and penalties for infringements of the rules have to be set accordingly.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the procedure to appeal against his Department's decisions relating to forms submitted in accordance with the intregrated administration and control system.

Mr. Curry: It is open to any farmer to contact his regional service centre if he is dissatisfied.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that deregulation is being applied to the forms required for the integrated administration and control system to keep them as simple as possible.

Mr. Curry: The forms have to reflect the requirements of the EC legislation. Subject to this, we have made the forms as simple as possible for farmers to understand.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the effect of the integrated administration and control system on the transfer of land from one occupier to another.

Mr. Curry: This mater is covered in the explanatory booklet on the integrated administration and control system.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what opportunities there will be to correct genuine errors on integrated administration and control system forms after 15 May.

Mr. Curry: The booklet on the integrated administration and control system will set out conditions for the correction of genuine errors.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the application forms for the integrated administration and control system to be published.

Mr. Curry: An explanatory booklet on the integrated administration and control system and area aid application forms will be dispatched to farmers in England and Wales on 2 April. Copies have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Mineral Hydrocarbons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will take steps to enforce the ban on the use of mineral hydrocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The results of studies of mineral hydrocarbons are currently being examined by the scientific committees that advise Ministers on food safety issues. No decisions will be taken until this independent expert assessment has been completed and the committees' recommendations have been received.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the food products which use mineral hydrocarbons in their manufacture.

Mr. Soames: I am aware that mineral hydrocarbons are used in the United Kingdom in the manufacture of base components for chewing gum and rind for whole pressed cheese. I am informed that certain other permitted uses have been discontinued. However, detailed information on remaining uses will be available when the independent expert committees that advise the Government on food safety have completed the examination of this subject on which they are currently engaged.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Curry: Consultancy fees totalling £429,037 were paid to KPMG Peat Marwick, Touche Ross and Price Waterhouse between the financial years 1987-88 and 1991-92. A further breakdown of figures cannot be given, as this information is classified commercial in confidence. These consultancy firms were involved in nine areas of work in my core Department. This answer excludes contracts made for IT work and those made by executive agencies. Information on the precise nature of the contracts and their duration is not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Agricultural Tourism

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of farmers' revenue was derived from agricultural tourism in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is not available. A survey undertaken by the university of Exeter in 1989 and 1990 on a sample of 330 full-time farms which had diversified in England and Wales showed that income from the diversified activity contributed 11·4 per cent. on average to aggregate business income on the farm.

Lambs and Kids

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he intends to act on the 1987 FAWC report on the welfare of animals at market, in respect of a ban on the sale of lambs and goat kids under four weeks old at market unless at the foot of their dams;

(2) what is the number of unaccompanied lambs that have been sold at livestock markets in the current year;

(3) what action he is taking to enforce the MAFF Code on the Welfare of Animals in Livestock Markets (1990) in relation to unaccompanied lambs and kids.

Mr. Soames: In respect of the marketing of orphan or unaccompanied lambs, the Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990 (S.I. No. 2628), together with the guidance set out in the MAFF code of practice on the welfare of animals in livestock markets, implement the recommendations made by FAWC in its report. The FAWC report made no recommendation about banning the sale of lambs and goat kids in markets. The code of practice, which provides guidance and advice, has been drawn to the attention of all concerned with enforcement of the legislation.

Information on the numbers of unaccompanied lambs sold at markets is not collected centrally.

Basking Sharks

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total number of basking sharks caught in the United Kingdom waters in each of the last three years.

Mr. Curry: Although, under an EC fishery agreement, Norway could take basking sharks in United Kingdom waters, between 1987 and 1990 no basking sharks were taken. Figures for later years are not yet available. In addition, there is a very small and sporadic United Kingdom fishery.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the recruitment of basking shark stocks in United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Curry: United Kingdom Fisheries Departments collect no data on the recruitment to the stocks of basking shark which move into our waters.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent research his Department has commissioned into the status, breeding success and wintering patterns of the basking shark.

Mr. Curry: In 1988, the marine laboratory, Aberdeen, published a survey of scientific knowledge of the basking shark. It concluded that this shark was not under threat. The fishery in recent years has been minimal. The MLA continues to monitor and collect data.

Grants and Subsidies

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each type of grant and subsidy and the amount provided for each for the 1993-94 budget, where the grants or subsidies are decided by his Department independent of CAP commitments.

Mr. Curry: Figures for the 1993-94 provision in respect of the main grants and subsidies can be found in the Ministry's February 1993 departmental report (Cm 2203), a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Further details could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Industry

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total weekly cost of keeping open those British Coal collieries at which regular production has ceased.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Coal Imports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the latest available figures for the sterling price per tonne of coal imported into the United Kingdom from Australia and China.

Mr. Eggar: The average costs of imported coal from Australia and China in 1992 were £32·73 and £31·40 per tonne respectively.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the president of the Board of Trade which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subject to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Eggar: In the last year, my Department has launched a number of market tests in areas which could be described as providing a professional service. The full list of tests was published in "The Citizen's Charter, First report: 1992"—Cm 2101. These tests are due to be completed by September 1993. Information on the forward market: testing programme is unavailable as it is still under preparation.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish an estimate of the return on investment in the THORP project based on *(a)* a 10 per cent. discount rate, *(b)* a 12 per cent. discount rate, *(c)* an 8 per cent. discount rate including interest during construction, *(d)* a 10 per cent. discount rate, including interest during construction and *(e)* a 12 per cent. discount rate, including interest during construction.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent his Department will be using the Touche Ross report in its assessment of the future of THORP; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *477*.

Drinks Measures

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 relating to beer or cider and froth.

Mr. Leigh: As part of the Government's deregulation initiative, my Department is reassessing the costs and benefits of the implementation of section 43. Interested parties have been asked to provide information relevant to this reassessment and their replies are being considered.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what formal discussions he has had with the European Commission on the possible re-authorisation of the

non-fossil fuel obligation, under article 92(3) of the EC treaty, in order to remove Electricité de France's non-leviable status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has placed in the Library of the House a summary of legal advice received on trade in electricity across the interconnector with France. As that indicated, EdF's non-leviable status could not be removed without giving EdF the benefit of levy payments. In view of this, my right hon. Friend does not propose to pursue this with the Commission.

Electricity

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department was first informed of the application by Rich and Co. for a licence to supply electricity; what steps were taken to interview its chairman; when his Department was first informed of Offer's decision to grant a licence to Rich and Co.; if he will give details of the involvement of his Department in the decision to grant the licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* The authority to grant second tier supply licences was delegated by the Secretary of State to the Director General of Electricity Supply at the time of vesting in March 1990. The Department is neither consulted not informed of applications for, or the award of, second tier supply licences as the approval of the Department is not required in such cases.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his statutory duties, and those of the Director General of Electricity Supply, under the Electricity Act 1989 in respect of the award of licences.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* The statutory duties of the President and of the Director General of Electricity Supply are set out in section 3 of the Electricity Act 1989, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Review

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when the Government's review of nuclear power will commence; and what will be the terms of reference;

(2) how far in advance of the Government's nuclear review the terms of reference will be published.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* My Department's White Paper on the prospects for coal was published on Thursday 25 March. The White Paper contains the following statement in paragraph 16.6:

"The Government will bring forward work on its review (of the future prospects for nuclear power) and will make a further announcement later this year."

Manufacturing, Planning and Implementation Scheme

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications have been received to date for the manufacturing, planning and implementation scheme.

Mr. Heseltine: To date, a total of 191 applications have been received. Fifty-two grants have been awarded, with a further 90 applications currently being processed. The scheme as announced on 19 February 1991 was for a three-year period to start on 1 June 1991 and end on 31 May 1994. To allow detailed appraisal no further applications will be considered after 31 May 1993.

Colliery Review

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the contribution to the gross domestic product of each of the 31 pits in the colliery review process from each year since 1987-88 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *454*.

Domestic Fuel

Mr. Dewar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the percentage of households in each region and in the United Kingdom who rely mainly on *(a)* oil, *(b)* piped gas, *(c)* cylinder gas, *(d)* electricity and *(e)* coal as as source of domestic fuel.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The Department of Trade and Industry estimates that households main energy sources are as follows:

	Per cent.
(a) Oil	3
(b) Piped gas	74
(c) Cylinder gas	n.a.
(d) Electricity	12
(e) Coal	9

Source: DTI estimates, using Building Research Establishment data.
n.a. not available.

These estimates relate to Great Britain only; United Kingdom and regional data are unavailable. They are based on households' main heating fuel. Heating is the dominate use of energy in most households.

ENVIRONMENT

Bletchley Park Memorial

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his response to proposals to establish Bletchley Park as a memorial to those who worked there during world war II.

Mr. Howard: I have made it clear that I welcome the proposal to create at Bletchley Park a visible memorial to the war-time activities that took place there. The Bletchley Park Trust is at present reviewing its plans for such a development, including purchase of the site owned by the Government and BT once this becomes surplus to requirements later this year. I look forward to constructive discussions with the trust.

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, 10 March, column *629*, if he will list *(a)* the scope

of the selective monitoring for radioactive pollution in private water supplies, *(b)* the consultants contracted and *(c)* the value of the contracts to which he makes reference.

Mr. Maclean: The monitoring provides for 100 samples from private water supplies in a given area of the United Kingdom to be taken and analysed each year. The areas covered by the current three-year contract, which is with ICI Tracerco, are: Beverley, East Yorkshire—1990; Dolgellau, north Wales—1991; Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland—1992. The value of the contract over this three-year period is £143,299 excluding VAT.

Council Tax, Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Lambeth are liable to pay the council tax; and what number fall into each band.

Mr. Robin Squire: The number of dwellings in each valuation band on the proposed valuation list sent to the London borough of Lambeth in November 1992 was as follows:

Council tax band	*Number of dwellings*
A	3,556
B	30,838
C	34,126
D	24,328
E	11,647
F	8,985
G	4,596
H	244
TOTAL	118,320

The Department does not hold information about the number of households liable to pay the council tax. The number involved will be different from the number of dwellings shown above to the extent that there are more empty or exempt dwellings than dwellings which are occupied by more than one household.

Red Squirrels

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the organisation Red Alert about measures needed to preserve the indigenous red squirrels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have had no discussions with Red Alert about the preservation of red squirrels. Research by Red Alert is supported by grant aid from English Nature, the Government's statutory advisers on nature conservation, and regular contact is maintained between the two organisations. I am very much aware of the threat to our indigenous red squirrels and will encourage all measures to help them.

Oil Pollution

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for further interim action to protect the United Kingdom coastline against oil pollution from merchant ships in advance of the report of the Donaldson inquiry.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport gave to the hon. Member for Richmond (Mr. Hague) on 26 February 1993 at column *696* on the interim measures that have been voluntarily agreed by the shipping industry pending Lord Donaldson's report. If further measures seem essential, we shall take them.

Environmental Action Fund

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all groups which have received funds from the environmental action fund for the 1993-94 financial year and the amounts granted to each group.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *83*.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline his criteria for deciding which groups receive funding from the environmental action fund for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Maclean: Applications to the environmental action fund were assessed against the priorities I announced when launching the fund on 20 July 1992, the extent to which the proposals would produce tangible benefits to the environment, and the degree to which they would provide value for money.

Women and the Environment

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which environmental groups have been funded by his Department which deal specifically with women and the environment for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Maclean: No such groups were funded under our original invitation to apply, but the townswomen's guilds later sought funding for an environmental project, and I am looking sympathetically at their request.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action has been taken to clarify the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 in respect of the definition of transferral of an economic entity with regard to the compulsory competitive tendering of public services;

(2) what are the reasons for the non-application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive with regard to a normal contract let under the compulsory competitive tendering legislation.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced on 11 March that he had issued and placed in the Library guidance on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)—TUPE—Regulations 1981 to the market testing of public services, including the contracting-out of local authority services following compulsory competitive tendering—CCT—*Official Report*, column *648*. As the guidance indicates, the contracted-out provision of a service is not affected by the TUPE regulations unless it

involves the transfer of an undertaking in the terms of the regulations—that is to say, the transfer of an economic entity which is capable of operating as a going concern, and which retains its identity. Whether or not a particular case of contracting-out following CCT involves such a transfer will depend on the nature of the service in question, and the arrangements under which the contractor carries out the provision of the service.

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make regulations and issue guidance to ensure that local authorities seek competitive tenders for services in a fair manner.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland have today laid before the House regulations made under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992. These come into force on 10 May, when guidance will be issued.

The regulations and guidance meet our commitment in the Government's Green Paper "Competing for Quality: Competition in Provision of Local Services" to establish a clear statutory framework for compulsory competitive tendering. They will ensure that competition for local services is fair, allowing local taxpayers to receive quality services which offer value for money.

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local authorities in England which are to undergo a structural reorganisation following the Local Government Commission's recommendations will also be required to seek tenders for work under the compulsory competitive tendering legislation.

Mr. Robin Squire: This Government are committed to efficient, effective local government. The work of the Local Government Commission in England and the compulsory competitive tendering—CCT—regime both have an important part to play in achieving this aim.

Reorganisation of boundaries and responsibilities is bound to put extra pressures on local authorities. Moreover, existing arrangements for the provision of services will not necessarily be appropriate for the reorganised authority structure. We therefore intend that local authorities which, following a review by the Local Government Commission, are about to undergo a structural reorganisation, or have recently undergone such a reorganisation, will be exempt for a short period from the obligatory requirements of CCT. In doing so, we also intend to protect the interests of contractors engaged by the local authority.

For those services already subject to CCT under the Local Government Act 1988, local authorities will be seeking to retender work throughout the period over which the commission will be conducting reviews of English authorities. We intend that the local authority undergoing restructuring will be exempt from the statutory requirement to seek competitive tenders before the work can be awarded to their own direct services organisation—DSO. This exemption will start from the date at which Parliament approves the statutory instrument making the structural change. New authorities will then be required to start CCT tendering as soon as possible after their setting-up, so as to have new contracts in operation within 18 months of reorganisation, or sooner.

Similar exemption provisions will apply to services subject to CCT under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980.

My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 10 November 1992 *Official Report*, column *743*, the Government's intention to extend CCT to local authority construction-related and corporate services. We intend that these services will be brought into the CCT regime from 1995-96, and a detailed timetable will be announced shortly. The Government recognise that it is particularly important for the arrangements for the key corporate services to reflect the structural organisation of the authority concerned.

We therefore intend that, as with services already subject to CCT, any local authority which is undergoing a structural change will similarly be exempt, for the period immediately before and after reorganisation, from the statutory requirement to seek competitive tenders for these services before work can be awarded to their own DSO.

The provisions I have described will not apply to metropolitan districts and London boroughs. Nor will they apply to those authorities which, following review, are not subject to structural reorganisation.

My Department will give careful consideration to the position of authorities which do not fall to be considered by the Commission until after the date at which new services become subject to CCT. The general exemptions described above will not apply to these authorities, but it may nevertheless be inappropriate to introduce competition for new services where a reorganisation may shortly follow.

These general exemptions are intended to allow for a smooth transition to successor authorities and the continued effective operation of CCT thereafter. I anticipate they will affect only a relatively small proportion of the contracts let by English local authorities at any one time. They will relieve both local authorities and contractors tendering for this work from the uncertainties surrounding the reorganisation process.

While these arrangements remove the mandatory requirement on the authorities concerned, authorities will have the freedom to continue competitive tendering throughout the reorganisation period, where they judge this to be sensible, and with appropriate consultation with shadow successor authorities.

There are a number of technical issues relating to the reorganisation of DSOs and the protection of existing contractual arrangements. My Department will issue more detailed advice on the operation of CCT where local authorities are undergoing structural change in due course.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made within the Property Services Agency to deal with inquiries in respect of prospective buyers of the agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redmond: Inquiries in respect of prospective buyers of the PSA Building Management businesses are dealt with by the privatisation and strategy directorate within the Property Services Agency or by the press office as appropriate. Statements will be made when contracts have been exchanged with the preferred buyers of the different businesses, probably in early summer.

Building Regulations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department gave to global warming considerations when considering proposals to increase domestic roof, wall and floor insulation standards in the Building Regulations part L revision.

Mr. Baldry: As stated in the consultation letter covering the proposals to review part L of the Building Regulations, these have been brought forward now because of growing environmental concerns and the Government's commitment to return CO_2 emissions to 1990 levels by 2000.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish technical information supplied to his Department by the Building Research Establishment and the National House Building Council, which his Department has considered in reaching its proposal not to increase current United Kingdom insulation standards in domestic roofs, walls and floors in the current Building Regulations part L revision.

Mr. Baldry: The proposals for the revision of part L of the Building Regulations would increase significantly current insulation standards in domestic roofs, walls and floors by requiring more demanding calculation procedures, requiring improved insulation around window and door openings, and by not permitting lower standards of wall, floor and roof insulation where double-glazing is used. In addition, views are being invited on improving U-values for roof and floor insulation. Estimates made by the Building Research Establishment of the costs and savings of the proposals were included in the summary paper deposited in the Library of the House on 26 January 1993.

Defence Personnel (Housing)

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue a circular to local authority housing departments, regarding the requirement of military authority possession orders for ex-service families and other irregular occupants of Ministry of Defence garrison properties, seeking to prove their eligibility for social housing.

Mr. Baldry: Advice to local authorities about this is already given in paragraph 10·21 of the "Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities", (third edition). That advice will be included in the draft text of an updated circular on housing for ex-service personnel, on which we intend to shortly to consult the local authority associations and other interested parties.

Burghfield Base

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations underlay the removal of Burghfield base, national grid ref. SU 6668, from the Ordnance Survey maps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The feature was removed from editions of maps published later than 1976 at the request of the owning authority; it is not considered to be in the national interest to publish details of the site. The need to impose restrictions on published material is regularly reviewed to ensure that detail is not unnecessarily withheld.

Building Research Establishment

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those commercial organisations which have placed contracts with the Building Research Establishment over the last three years for which figures are available; and what their contribution to the Building Research Establishment's income has been.

Mr. Baldry: The Building Research Establishment's list of firms and organisations for whom it has undertaken technical consultancy work is subject to normal client confidentiality. The total income earned from such clients over the last three financial years was:—

	£ million
1989-90	1·8
1990-91	2·9
1991-92	2·7

Planning Appeals (Costs)

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will announce the outcome of his review of the policy guidance, in his Department's circular 2/87, for the award costs to parties in appeals under town and country planning and other legislation.

Mr. Baldry: We have today issued a comprehensive circular, giving policy guidance on the criteria for awards of parties' costs in planning and other similar proceedings. This guidance replaces the present DOE circulars 2/87 and 23/91—Welsh Office Circulars 5/87 and 77/91. A copy of the circular has been placed in the parliamentary Libraries.

Council Tax

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish how many disabled people have been disqualified from receiving reductions in their council tax because their properties have been placed in band A; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The number of dwellings in band A which might qualify for a reduction could be determined only by asking residents of such properties to make applications. Such a request would be pointless, frustrating for the applicant and administratively costly.

Homeless Families (Cooking Facilities)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information local authorities are required to keep on the type and standard of cooking facilities available to homeless families placed in temporary accommodation.

Mr. Baldry: The "Homelessness Code of Guidance to Local Authorities" issued by my Department advises authorities to ensure that temporary accommodation meets acceptable standards; this would include the standard of cooking facilities. It is for each authority to decide what information to hold about this.

Mackmurdo Building

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received about the demand by Cadogan Estates that their leaseholder, the John Lewis Partnership, demolish the listed Mackmurdo building.

Mr. Baldry: No formal information has been received by the Secretary of State.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for opencast mining have been made and approved in each of the last five years; and what was the expected quantity of coal indicated.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* This information is not held centrally. According to statistics compiled by the County Planning Officers Society's Committee No. 3, however, the information requested is as shown in the table.

	Number of applications	*Number approved*	*Tonnage (thousands)*
1987-88	90	60	13,746
1988-89	100	66	28,389
1989-90	80	49	10,525
1990-91	118	79	12,722
1991-92	91	63	10,195

Water Quality (Norfolk)

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the six beaches in Norfolk which failed tests for enteroviruses in 1991 were not tested for enteroviruses in 1992.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* National Rivers Authority policy is to test for enteroviruses where the coliform standards were not met the previous season. Two of the six were tested in 1992, the other four met the coliform standards in 1991.

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inland waters in Norfolk conform to the definition of bathing area in article 1 of the water quality directive EC 76/160.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* The Department is not aware of any that fall within the definition.

Conservation Areas

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list United Kingdom-designated or candidate special protection areas under directive 79/409/EEC.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* Sixty-nine special protection areas have now been designated in the United Kingdom and the Government are firmly committed to designating further sites. Details of designated and potential sites have been placed in the Library.

Polluted Land

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conditions are specified for standards to which ground stabilisation and chemical pollution are to be treated for land which is subject to Government grants for its redevelopment.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The Department normally expects reclamation to be carried out in accordance with the current professional codes of practice applicable to the engineering operations involved, whether they be the stabilisation of ground or the treatment of contamination.

Hedgerows

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount has been allocated by his Department under the hedgerow incentive scheme for each year from 1992-93 to 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The following amounts have been made available to the Countryside Commission for this purpose:

Year	*£ million*
1992-93	0·55
1993-94	1·25
1994-95	1·75

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring his Department is carrying out with regard to the implementation of the hedgerow incentive scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Consultants have been appointed to monitor the implementation of the scheme over its first three years. Agreements made under the scheme extend over a 10-year period, under which farmers and landowners are required not only to restore specific hedgerows, but to manage positively all the hedgerows on their land in an environmentally sympathetic way. The Countryside Commission has the means to ensure that works are properly carried out in accordance with the agreements made, and to recover grant where appropriate.

Services Resettlement

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the location of blocks of flats which have been transferred to housing associations under the arrangements set up for services resettlement giving the names of the housing associations involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

In line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Defence's housing task force, surplus married quarters which are not suitable for sale to service personnel at a discount are now being offered in the first instance to housing associations at a discount in return for nomination rights. To date the following sales have been completed:

108 flats at Stamshaw, Portsmouth; Portsmouth Housing Association.

12 flats Renown Gardens, Lovedean: Portsmouth Housing Association.
18 flats, Ashley Court and Hutfield Court, Gosport: Portsmouth Housing Association.
12 flats, Wyvern Villas, Bristol: Haig Homes.
32 houses at Shawbury: Bromford Corinthia Housing Association.

We also have deals in Chatham, Gosport and Plymouth which we hope to complete shortly. In addition, deals in Plymouth, Woolwich, Portsmouth and Finningley are under negotiation.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total quantity of toxic waste exported from Britain to non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992; and what it is expected to be in (i) 1993 and (ii) 1994.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

There is no generally accepted definition of toxic waste. The nearest equivalent would be hazardous waste defined by the OECD red and amber lists. The total amount exported from the United Kingdom to non-OECD countries was 15,000 tonnes in 1990, 16,300 tonnes in 1991 and 9,000 tonnes in 1992.

We could provide an estimate for 1993 and 1994 only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to introduce a right of appeal for individuals against the issuing of section 42 certificates under the Fair Employment Acts 1976 and 1989; and what steps he is taking to ensure individuals can discover the nature of the allegations made.

Mr. Atkins: There are no plans to introduce a right of appeal. This question was considered in detail before and during the passage of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 and an undertaking was given that the matter would be kept under review. This remains the Government's position.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many section 42 certificates applying to Northern Ireland Electricity were issued under the Fair Employment Acts 1976 and 1989 in each year since their introduction; and what were the numbers for the various religious categories of complainants.

Mr. Atkins: Fourteen certificates relating to Northern Ireland Electricity have been issued under section 42 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 (as amended). Three were issued in 1981, three in 1984, two in 1987, four in 1988, one in 1989 and one in 1990. Twelve of the complainants were Roman Catholics and two were Protestants.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of section 42 certificates issued each year under the Fair Employment Act 1976 and its equivalent under the Fair Employment Act 1989 by employer and by religious category for public and private concerns.

Mr. Atkins: I am informed by the chairman of the Fair Employment Commission that the number of certificates issued each year under section 42 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, as amended, is as follows:

	Number
1977	—
1978	4
1979	—
1980	3
1981	3
1982	1
1983	1
1984	3
1985	2
1986	1
1987	2
1988	6
1989	1
1990	4
1991	—
1992	4
1993	—

Of the complainants, 30 were Roman Catholics and five were Protestants. In 20 cases the employer was a Government Department and in 15 cases the employer was a public body or a publicly owned company.

Hospital House Officers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new house officer and senior house officer posts were created in the Belfast City and Royal Victoria hospitals in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*House officers*		*Senior House officers*	
	Belfast City hospital	*Royal Victoria hospital*	*Belfast City hospital*	*Royal Victoria hospital*
1983	—	—	—	4
1984	1	—	1	3
1985	—	5	3	3
1986	—	—	8	9
1987	7	—	—	—
1988	—	—	8	3
1989	—	—	5	2
1990	1	—	5	3
1991	1	—	—	1

Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new house officer and senior house officer posts were created in the Downe hospital, Downpatrick and the Downpatrick maternity hospital in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* During the period 1983 to 1991, no new house officer posts were created in the Downe hospital or Downpatrick maternity hospital. One senior house officer post was created in Downe hospital in 1989. Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

House officer and senior house officer posts are primarily for training and should not be established solely to meet a service need. Where there is such a need, the appointment of a career grade doctor should be considered.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Children's Play Facilities

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his estimate of the amount spent annually per child on play facilities by national and local Government.

Mr. Key: This information is not held centrally.

Hospital Broadcasting

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what guidance he has given to the Radio Authority regarding the priority to be attached to applications for access to the FM spectrum for hospital broadcasting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have not given any guidance. The Radio Authority is responsible for licensing and for its procedures and priorities.

SCOTLAND

Correspondence

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *653*, when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive a full reply to his letter.

Sir Hector Monro: Within the next 10 days I expect to be in a position to reply to the hon. Member's letter of 23 December 1992 concerning the proposals submitted by Renfrewshire Enterprise for the East India harbour, Greenock.

EDUCATION

Classroom Practice

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the willingness of schools to improve classroom practice.

Mr. Forth: The Office for Standards in Education has a continued programme of school inspection and reports on all aspects of education in schools. The overall impression is that teachers and schools have made considerable efforts to improve classroom practice.

Disabled Students

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the financial allocation in real terms for students with disabilities to enter university nationwide in each year since 1985-86.

Mr. Boswell: The first table shows the value of the supplementary allowances available to disabled students on first degree and comparable courses at universities and other higher institutions under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations between 1985-86 and 1992-93.

The second table shows the total expenditure on these allowances by local education authorities in England and Wales between 1985-86 and 1990-91, the latest year for which this information is available. Assistance may also be available to disabled students from other sources.

Table 1

Academic year	*General expenditure*		*Disabled student allowances for: Non-medical personal helper*[2]		*Specialist equipment*[2]	
	Cash £	*1992-93 prices*[1] £	*Cash* £	*1992-93 prices*[1] £	*Cash* £	*1992-93 prices*[1] £
1985-86	555	810	—	—	—	—
1986-87	565	800	—	—	—	—
1987-88	700	952	—	—	—	—
1988-89	730	938	—	—	—	—
1989-90	765	914	—	—	—	—
1990-91	1,000	1,077	4,000	4,307	3,000	3,230
1991-92	1,060	1,098	4,240	4,391	3,180	3,293
1992-93	1,110	1,110	4,430	4,430	3,325	3,325

[1] Using the retail prices index at September 1992 prices.
[2] Additional allowances introduced with effect from 1 September 1990.

Table 2
Total expenditure by local education authorities in England and Wales on disabled students' allowances in mandatory awards

Academic year	*Cash* £	*1990-91 prices*[1] £
1985-86	106,036	142,581
1986-87	192,123	250,287
1987-88	157,586	194,599
1988-89	189,775	218,444
1989-90	186,701	201,649
1990-91	969,621	969,621

[1] Using the Gross Domestic Product deflator.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the change in the number of disabled people admitted to universities since 1987.

Mr. Boswell: The Government aim to ensure that people with disabilities are able to benefit from the higher education opportunities available. My right hon. Friend asked the new Higher Education Funding Council for England to consider how access for such students can be facilitated, and the council announced recently that it will allocate £3 million in 1993-94 for a special initiative to improve access for these students. The Government have also substantially increased the value and scope of the disabled students' allowances payable with the mandatory award. Information on the number of students with disabilities in higher education is not held centrally.

Foreign Languages (Primary Schools)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many primary schools offer a foreign language to their pupils; and to what extent the numbers have varied over the last 10 years.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not centrally recorded.

University Students

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest statistics on the number of *(a)* students from other EC countries and *(b)* non-EC students attending United Kingdom universities; and if he will estimate the income this brings to the universities.

Mr. Boswell: There were 19,500 students from other EC countries and 43,900 students from non EC countries studying in United Kingdom universities in the academic year 1991-92, when estimated fee income received by universities from these students was £274 million.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools have *(a)* fewer than 50 pupils; *(b)* 50 to 100 pupils, *(c)* 100 to 250 pupils, *(d)* 250 to 500 pupils, *(e)* 500 to 1,000 pupils, *(f)* 1,000 to 1,500 pupils and *(g)* more than 1,500 pupils.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the table. This uses latest available pupil numbers and is based on the 337 self-governing (GM) schools currently operating.

	Number
Fewer than 50 pupils	1
50-100 pupils	8
100-250 pupils	29
250-500 pupils	68
500-1,000 pupils	162
1,000-1,500 pupils	65
1,500 pupils or over	4

Assisted Places

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people are employed on the management of the assisted places scheme; at what cost; and what plans he has for placing the management of the assisted places scheme in private hands.

Mr. Forth: The full-time equivalent of 7·7 staff is directly engaged in the management of the assisted places scheme in the current financial year and the direct staff costs are some £130,000 per annum. My right hon. Friend currently has no plans to change the existing arrangements for the management of the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for the academic year 1991-92 those schools involved in the assisted places scheme with *(a)* the total number of pupils on rolls, *(b)* the number of assisted pupils and the percentage which *(b)* represents of *(a)*.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the following table:

Numbers of pupils in assisted places scheme schools in Academic year 1991-92

School name	*Number of pupils on roll*	*Number of assisted pupils*	*Percentage of assisted pupils to pupils on roll*
Abbey School, Reading	1,053	46	4·37
Abingdon	747	91	12·18
Ackworth	494	15	3·04
Aldenham	328	27	8·23
Alice Ottley	711	83	11·67
Alleyns, Dulwich	926	201	21·71
Ardingly College	651	13	2·00
Arnold School, Blackpool	1,171	76	6·49
Ashford	668	41	6·14
Ashville College	672	6	0·89
Austin Friars	308	5	1·62
Bancrofts	965	80	8·29
Barnard Castle	618	9	1·46
Bath High GPDST	626	99	15·81
Batley Grammar	609	243	39·90
Bedales	682	10	1·47
Bedford	1,111	92	8·28
Bedford High	1,013	120	11·85
Bedford Modern	1,191	160	13·43
Belvedere GPDST	567	166	29·28
Berkhamsted Girls	603	16	2·65
Berkhamsted	773	24	3·10
Birkenhead	1,077	219	20·33
Birkenhead High GPDST	950	251	26·42
Bishop's Stortford College	604	45	7·45
Blackheath High GPDST	496	85	17·14
Bloxham, Banbury	360	13	3·61
Bolton School Boys	999	263	26·33
Bolton School Girls	1,125	253	22·49
Bootham, York	350	15	4·29
Bradfield College	587	4	0·68
Bradford Girls Grammar	870	55	6·32
Bradford Grammar School	1,168	220	18·84

School name	*Number of pupils on roll*	*Number of assisted pupils*	*Percentage of assisted pupils to pupils on roll*
Brentwood School	1,155	84	7·27
Brighton College	482	115	23·86
Brighton/Hove High GPDST	718	151	21·03
Bristol Cathedral	459	133	28·98
Bristol Grammar	1,193	256	21·46
Bromley High GPDST	716	83	11·59
Bromsgrove	1,166	15	1·29
Bruton Girls	558	127	22·76
Burgess Hill Girls	577	14	2·43
Bury Grammar Boys	783	199	25·42
Bury Grammar Girls	1,141	24	1·30
Canford	501	3	5·99
Carmel College	262	70	26·72
Casterton	351	42	11·97
Caterham	723	117	16·18
Central Newcastle High GPDST	825	115	13·94
Charterhouse	698	7	1·00
Cheadle Hulme	912	126	13·82
Cheltenham Ladies College	848	12	1·42
Chigwell	644	66	10·25
Christ's Hospital	804	16	1·99
Churchers College	514	118	22·96
City of London	818	139	16·99
City of London Freemans	673	6	0·89
City of London Girls	646	109	16·87
Clifton College, Bristol	1,196	68	5·69
Clifton High, Bristol	824	43	5·22
Colfes	869	176	20·75
Colston's Girls	587	166	28·28
Colston's Bristol	729	77	10·56
Coventry, Bablake	1,957	273	13·95
Cranleigh	724	30	4·14
Croham Hurst	556	15	2·70
Croydon High GPDST	1·047	82	7·83
Culford	645	48	7·44
Dame Alice Harpur	1,007	142	14·10
Dame Allans Boys	472	118	25·00
Dame Allans Girls	449	120	26·73
Dauntseys	622	57	9·16
Denstone College	300	112	37·33
Derby High	508	10	1·97
Douai, Reading	262	15	5·73
Dover College	267	14	5·24
Downe House, Newbury	470	6	1·28
Dulwich College	1,393	273	19·60
Durham	373	21	5·63
Edgbaston College Girls	405	16	3·95
Edgehill College	496	139	28·02
Ellerslie (to 1992)	174	15	8·62
Ellesmere College	374	6	1·60
Eltham College, London	726	94	12·95
Emanuel, London SW11	757	283	37·38
Epsom College	673	23	3·42
Exeter	818	170	20·78
Farnborough Hill	488	153	31·35
Felixstowe College	339	5	4·42
Felsted, Dunmow	562	44	7·83
Forest School	1,173	128	10·91
Framlington College	710	6	0·85
Francis Holland	369	15	4·07
Friends, Saffron Walden	273	74	27·11
Giggleswick, Settle	435	9	2·07
Godolphin & Latymer	699	156	2·32
Godolphin, Salisbury	353	14	3·97
Greshams	769	10	1·30
Guildford High Girls	598	10	1·67
Haberdashers Askes Boys	1,300	228	17·54
Haberdashers Askes Girls	1,125	105	9·33
Haileybury and ISC	615	10	1·63
Hampton	891	187	20·99
Harrogate College	389	17	4·37
Headington	723	7	0·97
Hereford Cathedral	595	229	38·49
Highgate	904	35	3·87
Hipperholme Grammar	378	6	1·59
Holy Child	335	10	2·99

School name	Number of pupils on roll	Number of assisted pupils	Percentage of assisted pupils to pupils on roll
Hulme Grammar Boys	840	202	24·05
Hulme Grammar Girls	631	178	28·21
Hurstpierpoint College	519	13	2·50
Hymers College	939	141	15·02
Ipswich	618	74	11·97
Ipswich High GPDST	575	100	17·39
James Allens Girls	948	161	16·98
John Lyons	506	91	17·98
Kent College	740	88	11·89
Kimbolton Schools	713	15	2·10
King Edward VI High	544	125	22·98
King Edward VI Norwich	761	116	15·24
King Edward VI Southampton	945	223	23·60
King Edwards VII Lytham	616	231	37·50
King Edwards at Bath	853	110	12·90
King Edwards Birmingham	829	233	28·11
King Edwards Witley	522	72	13·79
Kings College Wimbledon	1,070	65	6·07
Kings High Girls, Warwick	553	137	24·77
Kings Bruton	347	11	3·17
Kings, Chester	596	84	14·09
Kings, Macclesfield	1,026	152	14·81
Kings, Rochester	650	58	8·92
Kings, Tynemouth	915	10	1·09
Kings, Worcester	905	179	19·78
Kingsley	586	10	1·71
Kingston Grammar	584	150	25·68
Kingswood School, Bath	483	39	8·07
Kirkham Grammar	646	79	12·23
La Sagesse Convent	507	150	29·59
Lady Eleanor Holles	806	37	4·59
Latymer Upper	1,053	325	30·86
Laxton	184	2	1·09
Leeds Girls High	949	73	7·69
Leeds Grammar	1,129	187	16·56
Leicester Grammar	565	22	3·89
Leighton Park	343	15	4·37
Leys, Cambridge	379	37	9·76
Liverpool College	687	182	26·49
Lord Wandsworth College	761	81	10·64
Loreto Convent Grammar	812	54	6·65
Loughborough Grammar	921	125	13·57
Loughborough High	528	94	17·80
Magdalen College	473	126	26·64
Malvern College	555	71	12·79
Manchester Grammar	1,430	257	17·97
Manchester High	970	172	17·73
Marist Convent Senior	406	7	1·72
Maynard	557	159	28·55
Merchant Taylors Girls	888	182	20·50
Merchant Taylors, Liverpool	846	207	24·47
Merchant Taylors, Northwood	704	67	9·52
Mill Hill	565	60	10·62
Monkton Combe	600	41	6·83
Mount Carmel, Cheshire	572	15	2·62
Mount St. Mary's College	324	69	21·30
Mount, York	327	15	4·59
Newcastle Under Lyme	1,347	419	31·11
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Church High	626	15	2·40
North London Collegiate	900	96	10·67
Northampton High	787	152	19·31
Norwich High GPDST	829	166	20·02
Notting Hill/Ealing High	764	116	15·18
Nottingham Girls High GPDST	1,072	199	18·56
Nottingham High	825	150	18·18
Oakham	1,036	15	1·45
Old Palace, Croydon	761	197	25·89
Oxford High GPDST	648	79	12·19
Pangbourne College	408	14	3·43
Perse School for Boys	651	58	8·91
Perse School for Girls	701	68	9·70
Plymouth College	876	187	21·35
Pocklington	714	133	18·63
Polam Hall	483	21	4·35
Portsmouth Grammar	1,088	191	17·56

School name	Number of pupils on roll	Number of assisted pupils	Percentage of assisted pupils to pupils on roll
Portsmouth High GPDST	710	132	18·59
Prior Park College	440	14	3·18
Putney High School GPDST	832	84	10·10
Queen Elizabeth Hospital	484	166	34·30
Queen Elizabeth, Blackburn	1,225	248	20·24
Queen Elizabeth, Wakefield	740	141	19·05
Queen Mary, Lytham	660	233	35·30
Queens College, London	398	74	18·59
Queens College, Taunton	699	66	9·44
Queens School, Chester	613	75	12·23
Ratcliffe College	456	69	15·13
Red Maids, Bristol	578	158	27·34
Redland High, Bristol	663	88	13·27
Reed's School, Gobham	340	15	4·41
Reigate Grammar	852	107	12·56
Rendcomb College	244	15	6·15
Repton	553	51	9·22
Rossall	782	41	5·24
Royal Grammar, Guildford	810	111	13·70
Royal Grammar, Newcastle	1,117	263	23·55
Royal Grammar, Worcester	895	254	28·38
Ryde School	628	7	1·11
Salesian College	499	54	10·82
Scarborough College	430	15	3·49
Sedbergh	458	40	8·73
Sevenoaks, Kent	914	10	1·09
Sheffield High GPDST	707	91	12·87
Shrewsbury High GPDST	610	76	12·46
Silcoates	560	6	1·07
Sir William Perkins	504	87	17·26
Solihull	1,000	21	2·10
South Hampstead High GPDST	726	68	9·37
St. Albans	670	113	16·87
St. Albans High Girls	677	50	7·39
St. Ambrose College	782	64	8·18
St. Anselms College	853	204	23·92
St. Bede's College	1,120	220	19·64
St. Bees	332	82	24·70
St. Benedict's	599	78	13·02
St. Catherine's	596	34	5·70
St. Dunstan's College	788	154	19·54
St. Edmund's College	618	80	12·94
St. Edward's College	883	396	44·85
St. Felix, Southwold	367	11	3·00
St. George's College	630	26	4·13
St. Helen and St. Katherine	508	89	17·52
St. Helen's, Northwood	920	43	4·67
St. John's College, Southsea	847	173	20·43
St. John's, Leatherhead	439	8	1·82
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	654	81	12·39
St. Joseph's College, Stoke	477	10	2·10
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	458	111	24·24
St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate	380	15	3·95
St. Margaret's, Bushey	471	13	2·76
St. Margaret's, Exeter	456	13	2·85
St. Mary and St. Anne	267	10	3·75
St. Mary's College, Crosby	800	235	29·38
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	572	110	19·23
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	367	59	16·08
St. Maurs Convent, Weybridge	713	52	7·29
St. Paul's Girls, Hammersmith	618	62	10·03
St. Paul's, Barnes	1,161	80	6·89
St. Peter's, York	768	126	16·41
St. Swithun's, Winchester	629	0	0·00
Stafford Grammar	292	10	3·42
Stamford	962	84	8·73
Stamford High	999	87	8·71
Stockport Grammar	1,259	230	18·27
Stoneyhurst College	421	30	7·13
Stowe	588	5	0·85
Streatham Hill/Clapham High	537	148	27·56
Surbiton High	704	14	1·99
Sutton High GPDST	802	59	7·36
Sutton Valence	384	62	16·15
Sydenham High GPDST	704	126	17·90
Talbot Heath	547	140	25·59

School name	Number of pupils on roll	Number of assisted pupils	Percentage of assisted pupils to pupils on roll
Taunton	1,026	52	5·07
Teesside High	541	10	1·85
Tonbridge	627	2	0·32
Tormead	522	8	1·53
Trent College	638	124	19·44
Trinity-of John Whitgift	834	141	16·91
Truro	907	117	12·90
Truro High	372	61	16·40
University College School	767	70	9·13
Upton Hall Convent	606	166	27·39
Ursuline Convent, Kent	285	15	5·26
Ursuline High, Ilford	401	144	35·91
Wakefield High	1,013	147	14·51
Walthamstow Hall	505	57	11·29
Warwick	981	141	14·37
Wellingborough	795	64	8·05
Wellington College	820	39	4·76
Wellington, Somerset	838	214	25·54
Wells Cathedral	815	78	9·57
West Buckland	566	85	15·02
Westholme	1,019	15	1·47
Westminster	610	53	8·69
Whitgift, Croydon	939	108	11·50
William Hulme Grammar	791	220	27·81
Wimbledon High GPDST	758	65	8·58
Winchester College	652	22	3·37
Wisbech Grammar	628	312	49·68
Withington Girls	569	71	12·48
Wolverhampton Grammar	653	261	39·97
Woodbridge	781	113	14·47
Woodhouse Grove	735	133	18·10
Worksop	374	15	4·01
Wrekin College	339	5	1·47
Wycliffe College	598	41	6·86
Yarm	560	21	3·75
	Average proportion		13·52

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state for each year in which the assisted places scheme has been operating the number of places available and the number actually taken up, the amount budgeted each year for the scheme and the amount actually spent.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the following table for each year up to 1991-92, the latest year for which complete figures are available:

Year	Places available[1]	Places taken up[1]	Budget estimate[2] £m	Actual outturn[2] £m
1981-82	5,446	4,185	3·3	3·0
1982-83	11,058	8,616	9·3	8·7
1983-84	15,866	13,102	16·5	15·0
1984-85	20,699	17,386	22·5	22·2
1985-86	25,210	21,412	31·1	29·6
1986-87	29,295	24,478	37·4	37·9
1987-88	33,228	26,899	47·8	46·0
1988-89	33,217	27,083	55·1	50·9
1989-90	33,280	27,008	57·0	56·5
1990-91	33,302	26,740	60·4	63·4
1991-92	33,312	27,641	64·9	75·7

The figures are for England only
[1] Academic year
[2] Financial year

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the full year cost of increasing all national insurance benefits by *(a)* 0·5 per cent. and *(b)* 0·3 per cent. in 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government Actuary's Department estimates are in the table.

All national insurance benefits

Year	Percentage increase	Full year cost £ million
1993-94	0·5	198
1993-94	0·3	119

Over-60s (Benefits)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people aged 60 years or over receive *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* community charge benefit in each of the standard regions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the tables. Information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Income support recipients aged 60 or over

Social security region	*Number of claimants*
South Western	121
London South	237
London North	249
Midlands	250
North Eastern	236
North Western	230
Wales	90
Scotland	155
Great Britain (Total)	1,567

Income Support Recipients Aged 60 or over

Social Security Region	*Number of Claimants*	
	Housing benefit	*Community charge benefit*
South West	125	249
South East	283	493
London	261	357
East Anglia	72	130
West Midlands	212	403
East Midlands	122	227
North West	242	416
Yorkshire and Humberside	159	245
North	179	264
Wales	91	139
Scotland	263	353
Great Britain (Total)	2,010	3,277

Notes:

1. Figures are thousands rounded to the nearest thousand. The totals do not sum due to rounding.
2. *Source:* Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry and the Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System—May 1991.
3. Income support information is not available for the standard statistical regions; the nearest alternative is given for this benefit.

Repetitive Strain Injury

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines he has issued to local Department of social security offices concerning the health risks of repetitive strain injury in the workplace.

Mr. Scott: Repetitive strain injury is a condition commonly contracted by those who operate visual display units for unreasonably long continuous sessions and/or in an ergonomically incorrect environment.

Since 1987, the Department of Social Security has stipulated that all VDU operators must work in accordance with a departmental information technology agreement. This agreement between management and the trade unions paid particular regard, among other things, to health and safety issues surrounding VDU usage, including ergonomic issues, and restricts the period of continuous operation to safe levels.

Employees were also issued with proprietary literature in 1991 which was intended to increase general awareness of the means by which injury to the wrist, hand and finger can be avoided.

All of the Department's VDUs are being, or have been, assessed to confirm that they comply with the provisions of new health and safety regulations which are effective from 1 January 1993. VDU users are receiving, or have received, further training on practices which will prevent repetitive strain injury. They have also been invited to contribute to the assessment process to ensure that personal ergonomic needs are met.

Diability Living Allowance

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the disability living allowance have come from Warrington, south; how many have been successful; and how many were successful on appeal.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

VAT (Fuel and Power)

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if those in receipt of *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* council tax rebates will be compensated for extending value-added tax to domestic fuel and power.

Mr. Burt: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 March 1993 at column *511*.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the national average figure for processing housing benefit claims within 14 days.

Mr. Burt: The proportion of claims processed within 14 days of receipt of all the necessary information is 76 per cent.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will announce his response to the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council's recommendations on chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: We have considered the Council's report on chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners and metal production workers very carefully and have accepted the recommendation that these diseases should be prescribed as industrial diseases in relation to underground coal miners. Regulations will be laid to give effect to this from 13 September 1993.

Under normal circumstances benefit claims in respect of industrial diseases can take several months to investigate, and in this case we anticipate very large numbers of claims from miners and ex-miners. We estimate that the number of claims dealt with over the next year or so under the industrial injuries scheme could be almost doubled.

We are concerned to ensure that claims are dealt with as quickly as possible and that unacceptable backlogs and delays do not arise. We consider that this can best be achieved by a two-stage take-on of claims. The regulations will provide for claims from older miners and ex-miners to be taken first, from 13 September 1993, and for claims from other miners and ex-miners from 1 March 1994. We are devising arrangements that will ensure that seriously ill miners and ex-miners will be able to submit a claim in the first period regardless of age. Payments will be backdated to 13 September 1993, if people claim at the appropriate

time and satisfy the usual conditions for the award of benefit, so that no one will lose benefit as a result of the phased take-on. Precise details of how the take-on claims will be handled will be well publicised before implementation.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence there is on the financial effects for landlords of bed-and-breakfast accommodation of an increase in the income support paid to homeless families living in such accommodation.

Mr. Burt: In the mid-1980s, benefit regulations and procedures relating to board and lodging were substantially re-appraised and tightened in response to widespread public criticism of abuse of the existing arrangements. The persistence of such abuse led to the subsequent abolition of the special treatment of boarders within income support in 1989. Retrieval of the evidence then available could now be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pensions (Report)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by Watson Europe on pensions in Britain and Europe.

Miss Widdecombe: I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library shortly.

VAT (Heating Fuels)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners and others on low incomes he expects to receive special help in Waveney with meeting the VAT on heating fuels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Information in the form requested is not available. Overall, some 8 million recipients of income-related benefits will gain from extra help. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be considering the precise way in which to target this help and his conclusions will be announced in the normal way in the autumn.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the Chelmsford parliamentary constituency are in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* Information for the United Kingdom is not available. However, the latest available information for Great Britain is in "Social Security Statistics 1992", table A3.05, a copy of which is in the Library. Discrete information for Chelmsford borough council, or the parliamentary constituency, is not available.

Pensions (Payment Methods)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what saving in public expenditure or other financial benefit accrues to his Department by retirement pensions being paid through automated credit transfer; and what proportion of retirement pensions being paid at present are paid *(a)* through ACT, *(b)* through post offices and *(c)* in other ways;

(2) how many letters he has sent in the last year to those about to retire advising them about how their pension may be paid; if all such letters gave information about pension payment through *(a)* the Post Office, *(b)* automated credit transfer and *(c)* other methods; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration and payment of retirement pension is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Max Madden, dated 26 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many letters he has sent in the last year to those about to retire advising them about how their pension may be paid; if all such letters gave information about pension payment through *(a)* the Post Office, *(b)* automated credit transfer and *(c)* other means; and what saving in public expenditure or other financial benefit accrues to his Department by retirement pensions being paid through automated credit transfer: and what proportion of retirement pensions being paid at present are paid through ACT, *(b)* through post offices and *(c)* in other ways.

Information relating to methods of payment is contained in the retirement pension claim form. 527,383 retirement pension claim packs were issued in the year ending 16 March 1993. Information regarding the various methods of payment is available to all applicants.

Savings arise through reduced administration costs. The average administrative cost of paying retirement pensions by ACT is three pence per payment. The alternative methods of paying retirement pensions are order books and payable orders; each payment costs an average of forty four pence and fifty one pence respectively. Additionally, ACT is not as susceptible to fraud in the same way as other methods of payment and this means further savings in public expenditure.

At the end of January this year, 69·5 per cent. of pensioners were paid by order book at the Post Office, 26·7 per cent. were paid by ACT, which includes customers using Girobank at the Post Office, and 3·8 per cent. were paid by payable order.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Goodlad: The tables list the contracts awarded by the diplomatic and aid wings of the Department for each of the last four years, and for the diplomatic wing in 1988-89. Information on contracts awarded by the aid wing in 1988-89 is not centrally recorded and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Arthur Andersen

(a) Diplomatic Wing

No contracts awarded in last five years

(b) Aid Wing

One contract only, awarded in 1991-92

Project Finance and Development, Former Soviet Union

7 weeks duration; value £450,000

Andersen Consulting

(a) Diplomatic Wing
No contracts awarded in the last five years
(b) Aid Wing
No contracts awarded in 1989-90 and 1990-91
Two contracts awarded in 1991-92
(i) Feasibility study, bread distribution Moscow
3 weeks duration; value £48,000
(ii) Bread distribution, Moscow 22 weeks duration; value £998,000
One contract awarded in 1992-93

Moscow bread project Phase II
9 months duration; value £245,000

K.P.M.G. Peat Marwick McLintock
(a) Diplomatic Wing
One contract awarded in 1988-89
Review of IT project management in FCO
one months duration; value £5,000

One contract awarded in 1989-90
Review of Information Systems Division Training
one months duration; value £14,000

No contracts awarded in 1990-91

Three contracts awarded in 1991-92
(i) Review of Information Systems Division Training Two months duration; value £22,000
(ii) Scrutiny on Training 3 weeks duration; value £15,000
(iii) Review of Career Planning 8 months duration; value £350,000
No contracts awarded in 1992-93
(b) Aid Wing
No contracts awarded in 1988-89
Two contracts awarded in 1989-90
(i) Public Service Commission, Zimbabwe
15 weeks duration; value £52,000
(ii) Economic Recovery Programme, Tanzania
14 weeks duration; value £72,000

Four contracts awarded in 1990-91
(i) Privatisation of the Ceska Insurance Company, Czechoslovakia
5 months duration; value £185,000
(ii) Public Service Review Phase 2, Guyana
6 months duration; value £812,000
(iii) Audit and Strategic Analysis of State Insurance Company, Poland
11 months duration; value £295,000
(iv) British Council Fee Rates, ODA
3 months duration; value £12,750

Six contracts awarded in 1991-92
(i) Insurance Division, Ministry of Finance, Poland
12 weeks duration; value £163,000
(ii) Civil Service Reform, Uganda
13 weeks duration; £262,000
(iii) Country Studies, climatic change: Ghana and Kenya
8 months duration; value £320,000
(iv) Public Service Review Phase IIB, Guyana
6 months duration; value £232,000
(v) Debt Reconciliation, Tanzania
3 months duration; value £100,000
(vi) Privatisation Study, Senegal
4 weeks duration; value £22,000

Nine contracts in 1992-93
(i) Agricultural Development Fund, Poland
6 months duration; value £92,000
(ii) Offshore Financial Services, St Kitts
2 months duration; value £49,000
(iii) Review of Services in OACD, ODA
3 months duration; value of £46,000
(iv) Singareni Colliery Spares Management and Incentives, India
12 weeks duration; value £163,000
(v) Procurement advice for Information Systems, Romania
one weeks duration; value £4,500
(vi) Public Sector Reform Programme, Compensation Policy, Turks and Caicos Is
10 weeks duration; value £86,000
(vii) Public Sector Reform Programme: Training Review, Turks and Caicos Is
12 weeks duration; value £86,000
(viii) Market Testing, Natural Resources Institute
6 days duration; value £5,500
(ix) Development of Costing Module, Natural Resources Institute
6 days duration; value £5,500

Touche Ross
(a) Diplomatic Wing
No contracts awarded in the last five years
(b) Aid Wing
Two contracts awarded in 1989-90
(i) Assistance to Budapest Stock Exchange, Hungary
6 weeks duration; value £41,000
(ii) Environment—CFC Consultancy, India
3 months duration; value £165,000
Three contracts awarded in 1990-91
(i) Management plan for interim multilateral ozone fund
3 months duration; value £47,000
(ii) Budapest Stock Exchange, Hungary
6 weeks duration; value £41,000
(iii) Accountant, Privatisation Foundation, Poland
4 months duration; value £92,000
Five contracts awarded in 1991-92
(i) Economic Implications of Limiting CO^2 emissions, Zimbabwe
6 weeks duration; value £122,000
(ii) Climate Change Study, Romania
4 months duration; value £50,000
(iii) Privatisation of public enterprises, Zambia
8 months duration; value £36,000
(iv) New trading floor, Budapest Stock Exchange, Hungar
19 months duration; value £295,000
(v) Privatisation Adviser, Zambia
4 years duration; value £150,000
One contract awarded in 1992-93
Phasing out ozone depletion substances, Algeria
5 weeks duration; value £8,000

Ernst and Young
(a) Diplomatic Wing
One contract awarded 1988-89 to 1989-90
Administrative and executive work on China Claim Funds
2 years duration; value £2 million
One contract awarded in 1990-91 CRAMM Review
9 months duration; value £20,000
One contract awarded in 1991-92
Advice on Heavy Baggage contract
3 months duration; value £17,000
One contract awarded in 1992-93 Overseas Estate Procurement System
6 months duration; value £59,000
(b) Aid Wing
No contracts awarded in 1989-90

Three contracts awarded in 1990-91
(i) Diagnostic studies of commercial banks, Poland
13 weeks duration; value £393,000
(ii) Privatisation assistance, Poland
6 months duration; value £225,000
(iii) Privatisation assistance, Czechoslovakia
7 months duration; value £475,000

Four contracts awarded in 1991-92

(i) Voucher privatisation programme, Czechoslovakia
18 months duration; value £740,000
(ii) Voucher privatisation, secondary market study, Czechoslovakia
5 months duration; value £200,000
(iii) Privatisation Slovakia National Insurance Co., Czechoslovakia
11 months duration; value £223,000
(iv) Assistance with privatisation policy, Stage 2, Czechoslovakia
8 months duration; value £575,000

Two contracts awarded in 1992-93
(i) Voucher privatisation secondary market study, Phase 2, Czechoslovakia
5 months duration; value £175,000
(ii) Voucher privatisation, secondary market study, Czechoslovakia
5 months duration; value £200,000

Price Waterhouse
(a) Diplomatic Wing
Two contracts awarded in 1988-89
(i) Management of Finance IT Systems
12 months duration; value £513,000
(ii) Administrative and executive work on Russian Fund Claims
18 months duration; value £3 million

One contract awarded in 1989-90
Maintenance of Finance IT Systems
4 years duration, to March 1993; value £758,000

No contracts awarded in 1990-91 and 1991-92

One contract awarded in 1992-93
Baselining Posts' Overseas Accounts System
6 months duration; value £71,000
(b) Aid Wing
Five contracts awarded in 1989-90
(i) Budget and Official Development Studies, Ghana
21 weeks duration; value £159,000
(ii) Dead Sea Chemical, Economic and Financial Appraisal, Jordan
18 months duration; value £246,000
(iii) Customs and Excise Programme Improvement Study, Kenya
13 weeks duration; value £34,000
(iv) Lesotho Highlands Development Authority, Phase II, Lesotho
54 months duration; value £525,000
(v) Trade Investment Programme, Indonesia
100 weeks duration; value £137,000
Two contracts awarded in 1990-91
(i) Word Processing Equipment, UK
4 weeks duration; value £10,000
(ii) Institutional Review, Attorney General's Office, Zambia
3 months duration; value £71,000
One contract awarded in 1991-92
Organisation and Business Review, Agrobanka, Czechoslovakia2 months duration; value £39,000
Three contracts awarded in 1992-93
(i) Traffic Costing System, Kenya Railways
3 months duration; value £60,000
(ii) Department of Statutory Bodies, Malawi
20 months duration; value £250,000
(iii) Review of Pensions, Tanzania Railways
12 months duration; value £83,000

UNESCO

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the gross and net costs of rejoining UNESCO.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At current rates of exchange, we estimate that our UNESCO assessed contribution for the remainder of 1993 would be about £5·8 million and that our advance payment to the organisation's working capital fund would be about £610,000.

We estimate our assessed contribution in 1994 would be about £10·6 million and the advance to working capital fund almost £200,000.

There would also be additional costs as a consequence of staff increases in London and Paris. We estimate these could amount to £250,000 a year. It is not possible to estimate any compensating financial benefits resulting from United Kingdom membership.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to announce a decision on rejoining UNESCO.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are keeping under close review a possible resumption of our UNESCO membership, but are not able to say when a decision might be taken.

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column *432*, what decisions were taken at the meetings of 17 and 18 March, respectively, to which he refers; what further developments, in regard to North Korea's withdrawal from the non-proliferation treaty, have taken place since the meetings in Vienna; and if he will place in the Library a copy of Her Majesty's Government's recent communication with North Korea on the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The non-proliferation treaty co-depositaries continue to co-ordinate closely their response to North Korea's announcement. On 18 March, the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors adopted a resolution approving the efforts of the secretariat to implement the request for inspections; reaffirming the board's confidence in the director general; confirming that North Korea's safeguards agreement remains in force and requesting the director general to report to a further meeting on 31 March. We have not been in direct communication with North Korea, other than receiving notification of the North Korean intention.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency put forward to the special session of the IAEA board of governors in Vienna called to evaluate the decision of North Korea to withdraw from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and to prohibit IAEA nuclear safeguards inspectors' access to certain nuclear facilities in North Korea.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 19 March 1993]:* At the IAEA board of governors meeting on 18 March, the British representative gave firm support to the resolution subsequently adopted by the board, which approved the efforts of the secretariat to implement the request for inspections; reaffirmed the board's confidence in the Director General; confirmed that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's safeguards agreement remains in force; and requested the director general to report to a further meeting on 31 March.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Goodlad: The market testing programmes of the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices for the 12 months to September 1993 were published on pages 61 and 63 of Command 2101 on 25 November 1992. Both wings are still considering their market testing plans for the following 12 months.

Cambodia

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the massacre on 10 March by the Khmer Rouge near Siem Reap in Cambodia and about what steps are being taken to apprehend the culprits.

Mr. Goodlad: According to the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, UNTAC, at approximately 8.30 pm on 10 March, a group of about 18 armed men entered the village of Chong Kneas in Siem Reap province killing 35 ethnic Vietnamese and wounding a further 24. It seems almost certain that the Khmer Rouge were responsible. The UNTAC special prosecutor has issued a warrant for the arrest of the alleged leader of the attack, Loeng Daru.

Belize

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Belize on the future maintenance of a British military presence in Belize.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in close touch with the Government of Belize on a wide range of issues. As with all our overseas defence commitments, the British military presence in Belize is kept under review.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for how long Her Majesty's Government are committed to maintaining a garrison in Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: At the time of independence it was agreed that the garrison in Belize would remain for an appropriate period. That remains the case. As with all our overseas defence commitments, the British military presence in Belize is kept under review.

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the British ambassador to the United Arab Emirates last met *(a)* the Head of State, *(b)* the Foreign Minister and *(c)* the Minister of the Interior or his equivalent.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's ambassador to the United Arab Emirates last met the President, Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Rashid Abdullah al Na'imi, on 23 March. He last met the Minister of the Interior, Lt. General Mohammed Saeed al Badi, on 14 February.

WALES

Economic Base

12. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to diversify and strengthen the economic base in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There has been a tremendous transformation in the Welsh economy since 1979. More than 800 new factories have opened and manufacturing output has increased by 25·4 per cent. Productivity per employee has increased from £8,677 to £30,698.

Patient Treatments

13. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many in-patients and day patients have been treated in Wales in the last 12 months.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the year to June 1992, NHS Wales treated 482,789 in-patients and 138,216 day cases, excluding those in psychiatric specialties.

Coal Industry

14. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the coal industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The findings of the Government's coal review were published in a White Paper on 25 March.

Structural Funding

15. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of local authorities in Wales to discuss the availability of structural funding in the Principality.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales chaired a meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 12 January at which European regional development fund funding was discussed. Welsh Office officials are in regular contact with local authorities about structural fund matters.

North Coast Main Line

16. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning services on the north Wales coast main railway line.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations over the last year.

Redundancies

17. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of redundancies declared in Wales since 1 March.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is not available.

European Regional Fund

18. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the European Commission concerning additional resources for Wales from the European regional fund.

Mr. David Hunt: I met Commissioner Millan on 15 March to discuss this and other issues.

Source Wales

19. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the future initiatives he intends to take under the Source Wales programme.

Mr. David Hunt: Source Wales has been managed and developed by the Welsh Development Agency since April 1992. Future activities will include a programme to identify companies' capabilities set against world class practice; assisting the development of innovation as a standard practice; and setting up a further six supplier clubs which will bring together groups of suppliers for development purposes.

Democracy

20. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to improve the quality of democracy in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My proposals for the reorganisation of local government will create accountable unitary authorities responsive to the needs of local people.

Valleys Initiative

21. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to build on the valleys initiative programme.

Mr. David Hunt: I recently announced my intention to launch a further five-year programme for the valleys. I will be giving further details shortly.

Inward Investment

22. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about inward investment in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Wales continues to attract high levels of inward investment—206 projects were recorded in 1992, an all-time record.

Local Government Legislation

23. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to introduce local government legislation.

Mr. David Hunt: As soon as the parliamentary timetable allows.

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current financial allocation from special central funding directly towards care for disabled people in the community in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of £2·565 million was made available in 1992-93 to support the development of more flexible forms of community care for elderly people and people with physical or sensory disabilities. This grant scheme will continue in 1993-94 and applications from social services authorities are currently arriving for consideration.

A total of £27·5 million is being transferred from social security resources to local authorities in 1993-94, together with a supplementary sum of £8·4 million to support the general implementation of the community care reforms. A further £1·614 million has been allocated to social services authorities in recognition of their additional responsibilities arising from the new independent living fund arrangements for the support of disabled people in the community.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses specifically designed for disabled people have been built in each housing authority area in Wales in each year since 1986.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the table.

New dwellings completed for the disabled, by district

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Aberconwy	0	0	0	0	0	28	15
Alyn and Deeside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arfon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Blaenau Gwent	0	40	0	0	0	0	0
Brecknock	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiff	28	5	6	34	0	0	0
Carmarthen	0	23	43	10	0	0	0
Ceredigion	2	1	15	0	6	4	0
Colwyn	0	0	0	0	0	11	0
Cynon Valley	0	34	0	0	0	0	0
Delyn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dinefwr	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Dwyfor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glyndwr	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Islwyn	19	35	0	4	0	0	0
Llanelli	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Lliw Valley	0	2	0	6	31	30	55
Meirionnydd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	0	6	11	0	0	0	0
Monmouth	0	0	21	3	15	37	0
Montgomeryshire	23	4	0	4	2	1	0
Neath	0	36	34	0	0	0	0
Newport	0	0	0	10	21	0	0
Ogwr	0	0	0	0	4	1	13
Port Talbot (Afan)	0	27	0	0	0	0	32

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Preseli Pembrokeshire	0	33	0	0	0	8	8
Radnorshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhondda	0	4	0	0	1	0	1
Rhuddlan	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Rhymney Valley	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swansea	0	10	0	0	0	0	0
Taff-Ely	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
Torfaen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vale of Glamorgan	1	10	1	0	2	1	0
Wrexham Maelor	11	0	20	12	19	0	0
Ynys Mon	0	0	2	0	0	25	0

Source: Local authority returns.

Hepatitis B

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients were found to be positive for hepatitis B antigen following screening as a result of being treated by the surgeon in Wrexham.

Dr. Gwilym Jones: Two hundred patients were identified as being at possible risk of infection. Of the 170 patients who have been tested to date, four hepatitis B positive cases are thought to be connected with surgical treatment at Wrexham Maelor hospital.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what special facilities are available in primary and secondary schools for Down's syndrome children in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities and school governing bodies have responsibilities to ensure that appropriate provision is made for children with special educational needs, including those with Down's syndrome. Provision will depend on the needs of the individual child.

The Education Bill proposes a duty on schools to develop and publish policies for the provision they make for all their children with special educational needs and to report annually to parents on the implementation of those policies.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total amount of regional assistance funds to industry allocated through his Department since 1986-87.

Mr. David Hunt: Since 1986-87 my Department has paid £584·8 million of regional assistance to industry in Wales.

Council Tax

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the amount of council tax transitional relief granted to each local authority in Wales; and what is the amount of transitional relief as a percentage of the total amount of transitional relief granted in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is no council tax transitional relief scheme for Wales.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names of the schools which have *(a)* achieved grant-maintained status, *(b)* been given permission to go ahead and *(c)* been refused permission to go ahead; and if he will express each category as a percentage of the total number of non-private schools in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Since my right hon. Friend's reply of 27 January, at column *743*, we have approved a further three schools for grant-maintained status. They are Maelor comprehensive, Clwyd; Ysgol Caergeiliog primary, Gwynedd; and Stanwell comprehensive, South Glamorgan. All three will become grant-maintained on 1 April. No applications for grant-maintained status have been turned down in this period.

Bees Officers

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will appoint more bees officers for Gwent.

Mr. David Hunt: It is proposed to employ seven bees officers in Wales in 1993. I am aware of concerns about possible outbreaks of varroa in Wales, although there are at present no confirmed cases of the disease. The importance of disease prevention is fully appreciated, and if any cases of varroa or other notifiable bee diseases are confirmed, appropriate control measures will be implemented.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the future assisted area status of Cardiff, Neath, Newport, Wrexham and Shotton.

Mr. David Hunt: The representations received about the review of assisted areas are currently being considered. The Government hope to be able to make an announcement on the outcome of the review as soon as possible.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *514*, if he will list the principal reasons for the Cardiff Bay development corporation quinquennial review not commencing in the financial year 1992-93 as indicated at paragraph 9.13 of Cm. 2215.

Mr. David Hunt: The review will begin as soon as a suitable officer has been identified and can be released to begin the work.

Toxic Waste Imports

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet representatives of Gwent county council and Torfaen borough council to discuss the proposed imports of toxic waste going from Germany to the ReChem plant at Pontypool;

(2) if he will meet representatives of the community of New Inn, Pontypool, to discuss the import of toxic waste from Germany going to the ReChem plant at Pontypool;

(3) if he will make representations to the European Commission concerning the transport of toxic waste going from Germany into Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am aware of the concerns of local authorities and the local community. The Government have already asked the German Government to ban the proposed shipment of hazardous waste from Hamburg. Our policy of self-sufficiency in final disposal for developed countries has been incorporated into the EC waste shipments regulation which will come into operation in May 1994. In these circumstances, I do not think that a meeting would be appropriate.

Business Rate Relief

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales have used their powers under section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to give uniform business rate relief; and how much relief they have given in each year.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are as follows:

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £
Llanelli BC	—	132
Newport BC	—	125
Cardiff CC	—	295
Lliw Valley BC	1,937	728
Total	1,937	1,280

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to encourage local authorities to use their powers under section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief from the uniform business rate and to promote awareness of their powers among businesses.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to issue further guidance to local authorities. Decisions on whether to give relief are a matter for them.

Public Bodies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of the total of registered disabled he has appointed to nominated bodies.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not collected.

Radon Gas

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to assess the danger to the people of Wales caused by radon gas concentrations in dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones; The first two phases of a survey to assess the extent of radon gas in Wales have been completed by the National Radiological Protection Board. The next phase of that survey will be undertaken shortly, with the results expected in spring 1994.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

30. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to review the methods used in the preparation and amendment of citizens charters.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not set down a central blueprint for preparing or amending charters. The important point is that both new and revised charters should set demanding but realistic targets for service delivery which reflect the expressed needs and priorities of their users.

Ministerial Responsibilities

32. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of his time he spends as Civil Service Minister, Science Minister, Minister responsible for the citizens charter and adviser to Her Majesty the Queen on the estate pertaining to the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Waldegrave: This varies from day to day, depending on the issues raised in each area.

Duchy Administration (Bolton)

34. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last visited Bolton to discuss the administration of the Duchy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I visited Bolton on 24 November last year and had discussions with the chairman of the Bolton justices, the convenor of my advisory committee and other senior magistrates. Afterwards I visited the Octagon theatre which the Duchy Benevolent Fund is helping with a donation towards its refurbishment. I will be visiting Bolton again tomorrow.

Secrecy in Government

35. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to reduce secrecy within Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made progress on many fronts and will follow up with further proposals in a White Paper later this year.

Science (White Paper)

36. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish his White Paper on science.

Mr. Waldegrave: I intend to publish a White Paper on science and technology in the next few months.

Market Testing

37. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will indicate the value of the central Government services that were market tested in the last two years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: About £25 million worth of central Government services were market tested in each of the last four years. In 1993-94, there are plans to market test activities worth £1·5 billion.

This fiftyfold increase in market testing between these years is good news for the taxpayer, because it leads to real savings, allowing the Government to deliver more, at no extra cost.

Science (Public Awareness)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what efforts have been made in the past two years by research councils to develop public awareness of science; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Research councils contribute to developing public awareness of science in a number of ways. These include publications, press briefings, displays and conferences publicising and explaining the councils' work; participation in the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science; institute open days; links with schools; and research into public attitudes to science.

Specific council activities in the past two years have included:

Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC)
"Research Horizons"—a new type of conference, held for the first time in 1992, aimed at encouraging young scientists to present their work to the media and the public
A video presenting the Council's work, winner of two top awards.
Medical Research Council (MRC)
Training of scientists in communication techniques.
Involvement in planning Science Museum exhibitions.
Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Extensive press and media contacts leading to feature articles, for example on biodiversity and mid-ocean ridges.
Involvement of local schools in project work at NERC institutes.
Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC)
Exhibitions at the Royal Agricultural Show, the Royal Welsh Show, and the ASDA Festival of Food and Farming, Hyde Park.
An annual schools competition, and a survey of pupil attitudes to biotechnology and genetic engineering.
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
Completion in 1991 of a major research programme on the public understanding of science and dissemination of the results, including a conference at the Science Museum.
The "Innovation Agenda"—a recent publicity campaign to highlight the role of science and technology in economic competitiveness.

The Government attach great importance to the development of public awareness of science and welcome the contribution of the research councils in this field.

EMPLOYMENT

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will introduce the principle of the joint liability of the transferor and the transferee, in respect of obligations arising from a contract of employment, into the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no plans to do so.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by her Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the precise form requested is available only at disproportionate cost. However, I am able to provide information relating to 1992-93.

Nature of Contract	*Duration*
Arthur Andersen	
Revision of TEC Guidance update	1 month
Andersen Consulting	
4 contracts for technical support for new computer systems for benefit payment	1 year, 6 months, 3 months and 2 months

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department's 1992-93 market testing programme, which runs up to September 1993, covers a range of activities of which the following may be regarded as falling within the definition of "professional services":

Research and Evaluation (Employment Service);
Psychologists supporting Placement, Assessment and Counselling Teams;
Occupational Psychologists.

None of these tests has yet been completed. The programme beyond September 1993 is still under consideration.

Jobcentres

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the performance of the jobcentres in Suffolk and Norfolk in each of the past three years in placing people back to work.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. David Porter, dated March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the

performance of the Jobcentres in Suffolk and Norfolk in each of the past three years in placing people back to work. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The numbers of people placed in work by Jobcentres in the Norfolk and Suffolk area in the last three years is as follows:

	Number
April 1990-March 1991	41,852
April 1991-March 1992	36,270
April 1992-5 February 1993[1]	32,394

[1] The latest date for which figures are available.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Business Start-ups

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of new job opportunities under the business start-up scheme expansion announced in the Budget for East Anglia; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department's regional directors will be in touch with individual training and enterprise councils in due course to discuss the number of new opportunities under the business start-up scheme for each TEC.

Workstart

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many pilot workstart schemes for employers to create jobs for long-term unemployed she expects to set up in East Anglia; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 23 March that workstart pilots will be run by Tyneside and Devon and Cornwall TECs, and by the Employment Service in east Kent and in south and south-west London. We also recently announced a pilot community work scheme. It will be run in north Norfolk and will get under way shortly.

Community Action

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on how many of the proposed community action opportunities announced in the Budget she expects to set up in Suffolk and Norfolk and how the projects will be implemented.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have asked the Employment Service to put in hand the necessary arrangements so that community action opportunities can be available from the summer. Announcements will be made in due course of the numbers of opportunities that will be available in each area and how they will be delivered.

Disallowance of Benefit

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish tables for cases of disallowances of benefit for each adjudication sector and administrative region since the third quarter of 1990 to the most convenient recent date for which statistics are available for each month or quarter.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated March 1993

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about publishing tables for cases of disallowance of benefit. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

To ensure that the most effective use is made of our total adjudication resource, cases where there is a doubt about entitlement to benefit are transferred between regions to match workloads with handling capacity. It does not necessarily follow, therefore, that decisions made in an individual sector office relate to cases referred by my local offices in the same geographical area or region. Information about the number of decisions made is not therefore collated or published by sector office.

Reports on the volumes of adjudication decisions given both nationally and by originating geographical region are, however, collated and published. These reports, entitled Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions, contain details of the number and type of decisions given during the period, and have been recently revised to include information on the percentage of adverse decisions. At the time of writing, this information is available up to and including September 1992 and can be obtained from the House of Commons Library.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the individuals and organisations retained by her Department as consultants in the current andeach of the preceding three years indicating, in each case, the nature of their work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Disabled People

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) which local authorities employ fewer than the 3 per cent. employment quota of disabled people; and if she will make a statement;

(2) how many disabled people are employed by local authorities in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M E G Fogden to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 29 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to respond to your

Parliamentary Questions about which local authorities employ fewer than the 3 per cent. quota of disabled people; and how many disabled people are employed by local authorities in the United Kingdom. These are matters which, in respect of Great Britain, fall within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Tables showing the number of registered disabled people employed by a wide range of public sector employers in Great Britain, including local authorities, and the percentage of total staff represented by those numbers, are published annually in the "Employment Gazette". The information is published with the agreement of the individual employers concerned. Only those disabled people who have chosen to register as disabled under the terms of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958 count towards the Quota.

The tables of figures are preceded by a short article. This explains how and when the information is collected, and the formula which has to be used by employers, for the purposes of the Quota Scheme, to calculate their number of registered disabled workers and their total workforce. Both are in terms of "staff unit" equivalents rather than people.

I enclose an extract from the February 1992 issue of "Employment Gazette" this includes data on the Quota positions of local authorities at 1 June 1991. The total number of registered disabled people (in terms of staff units) employed by local authorities was 17,910. This is the aggregate total for district and country councils in England and Wales, Scottish district and regional councils, Scottish island councils and London borough councils.

I expect the tables of figures for June 1992 to be in the April 1993 issue of "Employment Gazette", which is due to be published on 8 April. A copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

The extract from the "Employment Gazette" has been placed in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Forces (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of people employed, distinguishing between *(a)* professional and *(b)* lay personnel, in each of the police forces in Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of police officers and civilian employees as at 31 December 1992 are given in the table.

Force	*Police officers*	*Civilians*
Dyfed-Powys	967	272
Gwent	1,000	319
North Wales	1,356	473
South Wales	3,164	1,079

Crime (Greater Manchester)

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of males between the ages of 15 and 30 years have been convicted of at least one indictable offence in the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. Jack: The information is not available in the form requested. Nationally, 24 per cent. of males born in 1953 have been estimated to have been convicted of at least one "standard list" offence between the ages of 15 and 30 years; 33 per cent. at age 30 or less. These estimates stem from a sample of some 8,500 offenders from the offenders index. More details are given in table 1 of HOSB 32/89 "Criminal and Custodial careers of those born in 1953, 1958 and 1963", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Citizenship

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those immigrants who have been granted settlement for five or more years have subsequently been granted British citizenship.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The statistics on persons granted British citizenship do not identify when the person was granted settlement.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what estimate he has made of the effect of the proposals to reduce section 11 funding under the Local Government Act 1966 on Barham primary school;

(2) how many representations he has received regarding the recent consultative document to reduce funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Up to 25 March, some 500 letters, and 6 petitions bearing some 1,200 signatures, had been received in response to the Home Office letter of 26 November to local authorities and other recipients of funding under section 11. Grant will continue to be available to support all projects approved for funding, but we have invited local authorities to let us have their views on how the reduced level of grant can be deployed most effectively. It is for local education authorities to assess the position of individual schools.

Cautions

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records there are of the level of cautions administered in each police area for the last quarter and for a similiar period one and two years before; and what proportion these are of detected crime.

Mr. Jack: Figures for persons cautioned by the police for the fourth quarters of 1989,1990 and 1991 (the latest available period) are shown in the following tables.

Figures for the proportion of detected notifiable offences that were cleared up by means of a caution are provided separately as they relate to offences rather than offenders and to a different coverage of offences (broadly all indictable offences and *some* summary non-motoring offence).

Persons cautioned by police force area and offence type—1991 (Quarter 4)

	Indictable offences (excluding motoring)	*Summary non-motoring offences*	*All offences (excluding motoring)*
Avon and Somerset	710	35	745
Bedfordshire	605	105	710
Cambridgeshire	613	95	708
Cheshire	888	329	1,217
Cleveland	805	239	1,044
Cumbria	383	240	623
Derbyshire	780	277	1,057
Devon and Cornwall	1,212	467	1,679
Dorset	408	105	513
Durham	280	150	430
Essex	1,114	299	1,413
Gloucester	402	78	480
Greater Manchester	2,608	1,003	3,611
Hampshire	1,634	578	2,212
Hertfordshire	587	41	628
Humberside	1,244	402	1,646
Kent	1,549	231	1,780
Lancashire	1,238	425	1,663
Leicestershire	796	297	1,093
Lincolnshire	418	60	478
City of London	102	63	165
Merseyside	1,546	1,377	2,923
Metropolitan Police	7,639	10,631	18,270
Norfolk	624	264	888
Northamptonshire	358	245	603
Northumbria	1,336	492	1,828
North Yorkshire	815	160	975
Nottinghamshire	1,632	289	1,921
South Yorkshire	1,403	563	1,966
Staffordshire	1,058	381	1,439
Suffolk	717	194	911
Surrey	541	37	578
Sussex	1,043	338	1,381
Thames Valley	1,727	568	2,295
Warwickshire	520	117	637
West Mercia	1,206	429	1,635
West Midlands	3,377	1,391	4,768
West Yorkshire	1,997	546	2,543
Wiltshire	464	173	637
Dyfed Powys	438	82	520
Gwent	630	318	948
North Wales	517	125	642
South Wales	962	487	1,449
England	46,379	23,714	70,093
Wales	2,547	1,012	3,559
England and Wales	48,926	24,726	73,652

Persons cautioned by police force area and offence type—1990 (Quarter 4)

	Indictable offences (excluding motoring)	*Summary non-motoring offences*	*All offences (excluding motoring)*
Avon and Somerset	606	137	743
Bedfordshire	434	134	568
Cambridgeshire	488	172	660
Cheshire	929	483	1,412
Cleveland	607	280	887
Cumbria	314	219	533
Derbyshire	635	346	981
Devon and Cornwall	918	446	1,364
Dorset	304	177	481
Durham	208	168	376
Essex	944	362	1,306
Gloucester	433	111	544
Greater Manchester	2,638	1,212	3,850
Hampshire	2,569	1,133	3,702
Hertfordshire	614	56	670
Humberside	1,201	514	1,715
Kent	1,127	246	1,373
Lancashire	987	371	1,358
Leicestershire	605	253	858
Lincolnshire	323	128	451
City of London	74	68	142

	Indictable offences (excluding motoring)	Summary non-motoring offences	All offences (excluding motoring)
Merseyside	1,402	1,006	2,408
Metropolitan Police	7,167	11,504	18,671
Norfolk	516	227	743
Northamptonshire	346	229	575
Northumbria	1,113	525	1,638
North Yorkshire	316	118	434
Nottinghamshire	1,117	274	1,391
South Yorkshire	1,028	545	1,573
Staffordshire	900	143	1,043
Suffolk	270	201	471
Surrey	456	45	501
Sussex	867	170	1,037
Thames Valley	1,205	523	1,728
Warwickshire	271	67	338
West Mercia	960	371	1,331
West Midlands	2,140	572	2,712
West Yorkshire	1,936	686	2,622
Wiltshire	583	181	764
Dyfed Powys	266	69	335
Gwent	330	295	625
North Wales	439	120	559
South Wales	824	561	1,385
England	39,551	24,403	63,954
Wales	1,859	1,045	2,904
England and Wales	41,410	25,448	66,858

Persons cautioned by police force area and offence type—1989 (Quarter 4)

	Indictable offences (excluding motoring)	Summary non-motoring offences	All offences (excluding motoring)
Avon and Somerset	581	86	667
Bedfordshire	237	98	335
Cambridgeshire	370	218	588
Cheshire	77	25	102
Cleveland	923	391	1,314
Cumbria	337	255	592
Derbyshire	499	352	851
Devon and Cornwall	724	470	1,194
Dorset	436	168	604
Durham	356	139	495
Essex	884	314	1,198
Gloucester	285	75	360
Greater Manchester	2,408	1,423	3,831
Hampshire	396	264	660
Hertfordshire	328	74	402
Humberside	883	466	1,349
Kent	861	199	1,060
Lancashire	735	198	933
Leicestershire	527	196	723
Lincolnshire	273	182	455
City of London	75	77	152
Merseyside	1,204	915	2,119
Metropolitan Police	6,162	11,617	17,779
Norfolk	486	221	707
Northamptonshire	264	285	549
Northumbria	1,270	609	1,879
North Yorkshire	240	139	379
Nottinghamshire	1,033	329	1,362
South Yorkshire	1,252	601	1,853
Staffordshire	961	215	1,176
Suffolk	297	160	457
Surrey	330	60	390
Sussex	630	248	878
Thames Valley	1,062	564	1,626
Warwickshire	285	82	367
West Mercia	779	403	1,182
West Midlands	2,014	429	2,443
West Yorkshire	2,036	601	2,637
Wiltshire	435	177	612
Dyfed Powys	205	69	274
Gwent	316	319	635
North Wales	367	210	577
South Wales	743	514	1,257

	Indictable offences (excluding motoring)	Summary non-motoring offences	All offences (excluding motoring)
England	32,935	23,325	56,260
Wales	1,631	1,112	2,743
England and Wales	34,566	24,437	59,003

Cautions as a proportion of all notifiable offences cleared up by police force area

Percentages

Police force area	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	9	10	9
Bedfordshire	16	10	14
Cambridgeshire	11	15	13
Cheshire	5	10	11
Cleveland	16	21	14
Cumbria	14	15	16
Derbyshire	14	17	16
Devon and Cornwall	7	9	13
Dorset	7	7	8
Durham	7	7	6
Essex	13	15	12
Gloucestershire	10	13	12
Greater Manchester	10	10	9
Hampshire	15	15	18
Hertfordshire	12	17	13
Humberside	13	12	13
Kent	14	14	19
Lancashire	8	8	8
Leicestershire	16	15	17
Lincolnshire	20	13	13
London, City of	16	15	14
Merseyside	6	7	7
Metropolitan Police	9	9	9
Norfolk	9	10	9
Northamptonshire	9	9	10
Northumbria	14	11	9
North Yorkshire	13	10	11
Nottinghamshire	11	15	17
South Yorkshire	10	9	10
Staffordshire	13	12	12
Suffolk	15	14	19
Surrey	14	17	18
Sussex	11	13	13
Thames Valley	11	13	15
Warwickshire	10	9	13
West Mercia	14	15	14
West Midlands	8	8	10
West Yorkshire	12	11	11
Wiltshire	17	16	15
Dyfed-Powys	8	9	9
Gwent	2	3	8
North Wales	12	10	11
South Wales	7	7	6
England and Wales	11	11	11

Immigration

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants since 1990 have been allowed leave to remain indefinitely in the United Kingdom under *(a)* the 10-year concession and *(b)* the 14-year concession; over the same period, how many applications were refused in each category; and of those refused who went on to appeal, how many of these appeals were successful.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under the long residence concession, a person who has 10 years or more continuous lawful residence in the United Kingdom, or 14 years continuous residence regardless of legality, may qualify for the grant of indefinite leave to remain depending on the circumstances of their particular case. The information we have does not distinguish those allowed to remain indefinitely after 14 years from those allowed to remain after 10; and information on refusals and on grants following appeal is not identifiable separately in the statistics. The information we have is as follows:

Acceptances for settlement under the long residence concession (excluding dependants)

	Number
1990	2,600
1991	2,200
1992	[1]2,100

[1]Provisional.

Domestic Violence

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives his Government have taken during the last three years to help women, with and without children, who are victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Jack: The Government take very seriously violence against women. A wide range of initiatives across Government has been taken in recent years to tackle domestic violence. These are directed towards ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice; that victims receive the necessary material emotional support, and that steps are taken towards prevention in the long term. A new interdepartmental official group has been established to co-ordinate future work, and Ministers will take forward their proposals.

Action has been taken to improve the criminal justice response to domestic violence. In July 1990, guidance was issued to the police in England and Wales and Scotland to ensure a quick and effective response. The RUC issued a similar force order in 1991. A study is in hand to assess the effects of the guidance in England and Wales. The Crown prosecution service is updating its comprehensive guidance issued to staff for dealing with domestic violence cases. The Lord Chancellor is giving detailed consideration to the recommendations for action through the civil court contained in the Law Commission report on "Domestic Violence and the occupation of the Family Home".

An increasing number of schemes and projects are being developed to provide help and support for victims. Safer cities projects have between them funded over 100 schemes aimed at the problem of domestic violence. Derby, Hull, Islington, and Tower Hamlets are funding domestic violence workers. Multi-agency groups to tackle the issue have been established in many areas. The Leicester project has set up a major initiative to fit emergency alarms to the homes of women at risk from their partners. In Hammersmith and Fulham, a scheme has been funded to support the children of women

experiencing domestic violence. In Northern Ireland, domestic violence forums were set up in Newtonabbey and Lisburn in 1992 under the safer cities initiative.

The Department of Health grant aids the Women's Aid Federation (England), which co-ordinates and supports the work of refuge groups nationally. Similar annual funding is made to Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid, and Northern Ireland Women's Aid respectively by the Scottish and Welsh Offices and Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the Department of Health is funding a national domestic violence telephone helpline run by WAF(E). In 1992-93, an extra £438,000 was provided by the Welsh Office to support projects in individual refuges and advice centres. The third edition of the homelessness code of guidance issued by the Department of Environment in 1991 advised local authorities that victims of domestic violence should be considered homeless and in priority need.

A wide range of action is being undertaken to prevent domestic violence in the long-term. A women's safety package, which includes a section dealing with domestic violence, is currently being produced by the Scottish Office crime prevention unit. Two innovative projects in Scotland, the CHANGE project in Central region and the Lothian probation project, are aimed at changing the behaviour of men who abuse their partners. They are being evaluated in a three-year study, which began in 1991.

The Government will continue to support research to inform future policy development. The Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland has been involved in a major research project over the last year into domestic violence in Northern Ireland. A draft final report on the project is presently being considered by the Department. The Home Office programme development unit is funding several innovative projects over the next three years. A 24-hour civilian team has been attached to Islington police station to help provide specialised counselling, advice and referral alongside an enhanced criminal justice response to domestic violence.

The Leeds inter-agency project is supporting a number of schemes, including the attachment of counsellors to GP surgeries to deal with the particular needs of children affected by domestic violence. In Keighley, a programme of activities will be developed on gender issues and family violence for use in schools and youth clubs. My Department is also evaluating a Merseyside police pilot project which provides alarm systems for women at risk.

Transgenic Animals

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers he has in respect of transgenic animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The use of all vertebrate animals in scientific procedures which may result in pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm is controlled by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Under the Act, the Home Office regulates not only the development of transgenic animals, but also the breeding of any such animals which may suffer harmful effects as a result of their transgenic status.

Boundaries (Essex)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Boundary Commission is expected *(a)* to commence its inquiries in Essex and *(b)* to publish its provisional recommendations for Essex.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England will shortly start work on its review of Essex and expects to publish provisional recommendations during June of this year.

Falklands War (Troops' Behaviour)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources have been allotted to the Metropolitan police to enable it to investigate allegations concerning misbehaviour of troops during the Falklands war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No additional resources have been allotted.

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers from the United Arab Emirates have undergone training in this country in the last 12 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Central records show that, in November 1992, two police officers from the United Arab Emirates attended a hostage negotiators course with the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many British police officers are either currently seconded to the United Arab Emirates or have been in the last 12 months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No British police officers are currently on secondment to the United Arab Emirates under the terms of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980, nor have there been any secondments there in the last 12 months.

Hong Kong

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been given British citizenship under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* As at 20 March 1993, 67,395.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 30 March 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Jury Service (Teachers)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many applications have been received from primary school teachers undertaking standard assessment tasks to be exempt from jury service; and how many have been granted in each of the last two years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No statistics are collected on the number of applications for excusal from jury service made, the number of applications granted or the reasons for such applications. However, applications for deferral of jury service or excusal from jury service received from teachers summoned to serve during term time, and particularly during examination periods, are treated sympathetically.

EMPLOYMENT

Disability

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether people with disabilities will continue to have priority on her Department's main employment and training programmes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The inclusion of people with disabilities in the Department's aim group has meant, in effect, that they have had priority for a place on a suitable programme. At the same time as we introduce training for work, we are strengthening the priority that people with disabilities will have on these programmes. The effect will be that people with disabilities will have priority for a place not just on one suitable programme but on each one for which they are suitable. This represents a significant enhancement of the priority given at the moment to people with disabilities.

The programmes for which people with disabilities will have priority for a place from 1 April are: training for work, jobclub, job interview guarantee, work trial and business start-up.

In addition, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear in his Budget statement, people with disabilities will be given priority on learning for work and community action.

Restart

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons have taken part in the restart scheme since its inception; of those how many went on to full time employment; and what has been the total cost of operating the scheme since it began.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 30 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about Restart Courses. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Since they were introduced in July 1986 to December 1992, 513,736 people attended Restart Courses at a cost of around £49 million.

We do not however collect regular information on the numbers of people who subsequently start jobs. However, a recent national survey showed that 9·4 per cent. of the respondents were either in a job or waiting to start one. Many more had, of course, gone on to join another programme such as Jobclub or training.

Restart Courses are not simply about applying for jobs. Research has shown that many people suffer a loss of confidence and motivation after a long spell of unemployment. The Restart Course, which normally lasts one week, aims to help such people set new and realistic goals for themselves, to feel confident about achieving them and to develop an action plan. This will help them apply for jobs or other employment or training opportunities to help them back to work. Indeed so far this year 90 per cent. of the people who completed courses went on to apply for an employment or other opportunity. Therefore a Restart Course should be seen as a stepping stone, often a very necessary one towards more help.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this reply in the Library of the House.

Graduate Unemployment

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has on the number of persons with university degrees who have been unemployed for *(a)* six months, *(b)* one year and *(c)* more than one year.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest estimates (not seasonally adjusted) from the Labour Force Survey for Great Britain relate to autumn 1992, and show that of those people with a degree or equivalent qualification who were unemployed on the ILO definition, 91,000 had been unemployed less than six months, 28,000 from six to 12 months and 48,000 unemployed for over one year.

Dismissals (Written Reasons)

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will take steps to ensure that employees can receive written statements of reasons for dismissal after six months of employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: No. The two-year qualifying period, in line with that for making a complaint of unfair dismissal, strikes the right balance between the interests of employers and employees.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to ensure that the written statement of terms and conditions received by employees working over eight hours a week includes details about redundancy selection procedures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no such plans.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence her Department has that employers are unilaterally changing their employees' terms and conditions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have received a number of letters to this effect, but employers cannot with impunity breach their contracts of employment with their employees.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to publicise the new right to a written statement of terms and conditions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When the relevant provisions of the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill come into force, the Department will issue a revised booklet, free of charge, explaining the right to receive a written statement of main terms and conditions of employment.

Unfair Dismissal

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to amend the qualifying period for employees claiming unfair dismissal for *(a)* full-time workers and *(b)* part-time workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, currently before Parliament, will enable all employees to complain of unfair dismissal, regardless of their length of service or hours of work, if they are dismissed on maternity-related grounds, or for taking certain types of action on health and safety grounds, or for seeking to enforce a statutory employment protection right.

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to amend the law to ensure that employees are protected from unfair dismissal when seeking to enforce a statutory right.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A Government amendment to the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, introducing a new clause which will make it automatically unfair for an employer to dismiss an employee, regardless of length of service or hours of work, if the reason or the principal reason for the dismissal was that the employee had sought in good faith to enforce a statutory employment protection right, was approved in Committee in another place on 25 March 1993.

Kilburn Skills

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received from Chief Superintendent David Jarvis of Kilburn and Harlesden police, North London, on the level of funding to Kilburn Skills, a training centre in the London borough of Brent; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have received no representations from Chief Superintendent David Jarvis of Kilburn and Harlesden police, on the funding of Kilburn Skills training centre which receives funding from both Brent council and North West London training and enterprise council. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is therefore not in a position to make a statement.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a copy of the final version of the 1993-94 TEC operating agreement; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have arranged for a copy of the 1993-94 TEC operating agreement to be placed in the Library. Negotiations between the Department and the large majority of TECs on the 1993-94 contracting arrangements have been completed. We expect the remaining contracts to be signed shortly.

Industrial Tribunals

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many current applications to industrial tribunals are experiencing a period of delay due to employer's insolvency *(a)* in the northern region and *(b)* in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average period of delay experienced by applicants to industrial tribunals in gaining a judgment where the employer concerned is declared insolvent.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the time taken between lodging a complaint and the promulgation of the tribunal decision is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The promulgation of a decision after the hearing would not normally be delayed because of an employer's financial position, and the majority of decisions are promulgated within three to four weeks of the hearing.

Multinational Enterprises

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in the EC draft directive on information and consultation in multinational enterprises; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An explanatory memorandum dated 24 March, which describes progress on the proposal to date, has been submitted by this Department to the House of Commons Select Committee on European Legislation. The proposal is likely to be discussed a number of times under the Danish presidency.

Part-time Workers

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to increase the employment rights of part-time workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, currently before Parliament, will further increase the already substantial range of statutory employment protection rights, including for part-timers.

The Bill will give all employees, regardless of their hours of work or length of service, the following new rights:

a right for pregnant women to take at least 14 weeks statutory maternity leave;
comprehensive protection against being unfairly dismissed on maternity-related grounds;
protection against being unfairly dismissed or otherwise victimised for taking certain specified types of action on health and safety grounds; and
protection against being unfairly dismissed for having sought in good faith to enforce any statutory employment protection right.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Training Board (Secretary)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column 314, what post inspection by his Department took place of the Agricultural Training Board area office secretary based in Builth Wells whose grade changed in November 1988.

Mr. Curry: No formal inspection of Agricultural Training Board secretarial posts at Builth Wells was undertaken by MAFF in 1988. Furthermore, we have no record of any grading change affecting a secretarial post at Builth Wells in November 1988.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Curry: In the past 12 months, within the definition of professional and specialist services given on page 13 of the "Competing for Quality" White Paper, the following professional services have been subjected to market testing: the purchase of books and journals for MAFF libraries; pesticide evaluations; staff training contracts; general recruitment contracts. In all cases, the result has been the award of contracts to the private sector.

Over the next 12 months, the following professional services will be, or are currently being, market tested: IT systems, services and development; investigation services; staff training services; research and development; work carried out on MAFF's behalf by the laboratory of the Government chemist, the food science laboratory, Norwich and the central science laboratory; central services supplied to MAFF's agencies by MAFF.

Integrated Administration and Control

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ask the European Commission to delay the implementation of the integrated administration and control system beyond 15 May.

Mr. Curry: The 15 May deadline for the lodging of area aid application forms is laid down in Community legislation. The European Commission insists that there can be no later date in order that detailed checks, including on-farm inspections, can be carried out while crops are still in the ground and before the end of the set-aside period, or in the case of forage areas during the period when the land is normally grazed. There is therefore no prospect of amending legislation to extend the deadline this year.

Badgers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of badger setts, by country, closed or otherwise, seriously interfered with by or under licence from his Department's officials between 18 January and 15 March.

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will issue to farmers the documentation needed for them to submit area claims under the CAP reform arrangements.

Mr. Gummer: As indicated in my hon. Friend the Minister of State's reply of 29 March to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), at column 47, the documents for the integrated administrative control system will be sent to farmers in England and Wales on 2 April 1993. We held a press conference this morning and met representatives of the industry this afternoon to explain in full the IACS requirements. We shall continue to do what we can to ensure that farmers and their representatives are clear what they have to do to complete their application forms accurately and on time.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Teachers (Jury Service)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend the current jury regulations to automatically exempt primary school teachers undertaking standard assessment tasks from jury service.

Mr. Jack: I have no such plans. It is, however, open to anyone summoned for jury service to apply for excusal or deferral if they have good reason for doing so.

Police Training

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department has taken to ensure that specific instruction concerning racial incidents is included in police training courses.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The issue of racial attacks is specifically addressed at the specialist support unit for community and race relations training, which has been funded by the Home Office since 1989 and which provides training for force trainers and training managers.

Trainers who have studied at the unit are used to provide training in community and race relations matters, within forces, as part of probationer training at district

training centres, and as part of more advanced training at the central planning and training unit and the police staff college.

The second report of the interdepartmental racial attacks group noted that several forces used outside help, particularly racial equality councils, to contribute to such training, and that the majority of forces have reviewed or initiated race relations policies in relation to racial incidents.

Prison Education Staff

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications of the recent court ruling that the acquired rights directive does apply to prison education staff from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The implications of the judgment of Mr. Justice Ogden of 24 March in the case of Kenny and Woodroffe *v.* South Manchester college are being considered. South Manchester college, which was the defendant to the proceedings, has been granted leave to appeal.

United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is intended for all existing staff employed by the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service to be retained by the successor body; and what is the position over the existing UKIAS offices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As I announced on 16 March, in columns 170-171, my right hon. and learned Friend has accepted the proposals for a successor body to UKIAS set out in the Malins report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. As indicated in the report, the plans for transferring staff to the successor body will be in line with the provisions of Council directive 77/187 (the acquired rights directive). The planning group envisages that a nationwide service will continue, with offices in the exsisting areas covered by UKIAS.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are in hand for the successor body to the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service to advertise and appoint a director and other senior staff.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Members of the planning group established by my right hon. and learned Friend are now taking steps to establish the successor body to the UKIAS, as announced on 16 March at cols. 170-171. The recruitment of a director will be the first priority of the new immigration appeals advisory service.

Police Discipline Procedures

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will issue his consultation document reviewing police discipline procedures.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am today issuing a paper which examines police discipline procedures in the light of the considerable changes which have been, and are being, made to personnel management in the police service. I believe that the existing procedures, which date from world war 1, fail to meet the requirement of the public for a swift response to minor failures in what is expected of police officers. The present procedures are also, in many respects, unfair to individual officers and yet, where there have been serious breaches of conduct, can prevent proper action from being taken quickly and sensibly.

I have invited comments on the paper by 14 May and shall welcome views from everyone with an interest in these issues. I hope that interested parties, particularly the police staff associations and the Police Complaints Authority, will respond quickly so that there may be early and constructive discussion on the way forward.

Copies of the paper are available to hon. Members in the Library and, as usual, in the Vote Office.

Immigration

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list changes to the rules for visitors to the United Kingdom from India since 1989;

(2) what further changes he is considering to the rules for visitors to the United Kingdom from India.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No changes in the immigration rules relating specifically to visitors from India have been made since 1989, and my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to make any.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column 448, how many of the 36 nationals of former Yugoslavia whose applications to extend their visits to the United Kingdom during 1992 were refused have been removed from the United Kingdom; to which countries they were sent; and how many have lodged appeals against refusal to extend their visits;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column 448, how many of the 134 nationals of former Yugoslavia whose applications for extension of stay in the United Kingdom in 1992 were refused; how many were *(a)* students, *(b)* au pairs and *(c)* spouses; how many in each category have been removed from the United Kingdom; to which countries they were sent; and how many have lodged appeals against refusal to extend their stay.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]*: Information in respect of the refusals referred to is given in the table.

Refusals[1] of applications for extension of stay by nationals of the former Yugoslavia, by certain categories: 1992

	Number
Student	34
Au pair	13
Spouse[2]	20

[1] Excluding dependants.
[2] For probationary year.

Information about appeals against refusals of applications for extensions, and about removals after refusal is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, no national of the former Yugoslavia removed from the United Kingdom is being removed to a war zone.

Pornography

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to amend the obscenity laws so as to include a definition of pornography.

Mr. Jack: No. The term "pornography" has no legal significance, but the Obscene Publications Act 1959 already allows the courts to determine matters related to obscenity and pornography. Like our predecessors, the Government believe that any change in the definition of obscenity would be a matter of conscience for individual Members of Parliament and not a subject for Government legislation. However, as our record shows, the Government are prepared to offer their assistance and support to individual Members who have proposals for reform, provided that these appear to us to be workable, an improvement on the existing law and likely to command sufficient support in the House.

As I said in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) on 5 February at column 350, we are currently considering what improvements can be made in the enforcement of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and 1964, and other legislation relating to obscenity.

Wolds and Lindholme Prisons

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total cost per week of keeping a man in *(a)* HM prison Wolds and *(b)* HM prison Lindholme.

Mr. Jack: The average weekly cost of keeping a person in Wolds remand prison from April 1992, when the prison opened, until December 1992 was £626. Available figures for Lindholme prison, a category C training prison with dormitory accommodation, for the year ending March 1992, show that the average net operating cost per inmate per week was £336. This comparison is misleading, since unit costs are higher in the period during which a prison opens and is filling with prisoners, as Wolds was doing in 1992.

Offensive Weapons

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he proposes to reduce the carrying and use of knives and guns in the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to intervene in operational matters. I understand from the chief constable of the Greater Manchester police that he has set up a new unit specifically to deal with major armed crime. The force held an amnesty for offensive weapons last year.

Strip Searching

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what security risks necessitate the use of strip searching in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A person detained in police custody may be required to undergo a strip search only if the custody officer considers it to be necessary to remove an article which, under the terms of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, he would not be allowed to keep. This includes any item which the person might use to cause physical injury to himself or anyone else, to damage property, to interfere with evidence or to assist him to escape.

Prison officers in England and Wales may strip-search prisoners as a routine security measure for the purpose of detecting concealed weapons, drugs, explosives and other unauthorised items.

Officers of HM Customs and Excise have powers to strip-search a person in a prescribed area if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that he is carrying an article with respect to the importation or exportation of which any prohibition or restriction is in force. Suspected possession of weapons or explosives is covered by this category.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the rights of citizens to refuse to submit to official strip searching in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A person in police detention has no right to refuse to submit to a strip search if one is authorised by the custody officer. Where consent is withheld, such searches may be conducted by the use of reasonable force.

Strip searching in prisons is considered to be an important feature of routine security checks, and is not subject to the consent of prisoners.

A person who is required to submit to a search by an officer of HM Customs and Excise under section 164 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 may appeal to a magistrate, or to the superior of the officer concerned.

A person who is not exempt from control under the Immigration Act 1971 and who is seeking admission to the United Kingdom has no right to refuse to submit to a search of their baggage or person for documents by an immigration officer exercising powers under the Act. The power to search the person for documents is used sparingly and only where the circumstances justify it.

Political Donations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward legislation preventing privatised public utilities from making financial donations to political parties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no plans to do so.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Details of the contracts awarded by the Home Office during the last five years to the specified companies, are as follows:

Consultant	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	Total value £
Arthur Andersen	—	—	—	—	—	—
Andersen Consulting	—	—	—	—	—	—
KPMG Peat Marwick	Review of prison laundries (4 months) IND Relocation Study (1 year)	Training needs in Emergency Planning Department (6 months) Crime audit of Nottingham City Council (5 months)	Review of charging procedures (1 month)	Review of organisation of PNCO (4 months)	Market testing scoping study (on going)[1]	366,465
Touche Ross	Dtels management accounting system (12 months) PNC project support office (1 month) Statistics Department strategy study (3 months) Feasibility study for replacement MIS (3 months) preparation Preparation of model agreements (2 months) Study of Accountancy requirements (6 weeks)	Passport Agency study (2 months)	Review of catering service at Fire Service College (3 months)	Survey into motivation amongst police constables (3 months) Study into effective shift systems for the Police Service (3 months) Contracting out of Prison Service catering (10 months)	Immigration Service survey of staff attitudes (5 months) Review of shift working patterns in the Immigration Service (3 months) Radio Spectrum sizing study (6 months) Emergency Planning Department message handling system (2 weeks) ED5 asset valuation (2 weeks)	922,399
Ernst and Young		Revision of Operational requirement (2 months) Provision of support for marketing and sales activity (Arthur Young prior to Amalgamation) (3 years) Services of temporary marketing manager (Arthur Young) prior to Amalgamation (9 months)	Privatisation of the IBA Terrestrial Transmission Service (1 year) Validation of IT Strategy (3 months) Court escort area service (2 months) PROMIS/SPITS strategy study (3 months)	Consultancy assistance in ensuring VFM from the court escort service (1 month) Firearms Licensing Costs (1 month) Artificial intelligence feasibility study (2 months)	Market testing scoping study (on going)[1] Police roles and responsibilities (4 months) ICL domain review (2 months)	1,494,807
Price Waterhouse		Preliminary financial advice in privatisation of the IBA (2 months)	Advice on merits of computer programme (1 week)	Marketing strategy for Prison Service clothing and texture group (3 months)	Market testing consultancy support (6 months)	1,330,913

Consultant	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	Total value £
		Transmission Service (10 months)	Study into television licence fee (1 month)	Marketing survey (3 months)		
		Provision of financial advice on the privatisation of the IBA transmission service (10 months)	Police activity sampling a pilot study (4 months)			

[1] Where a fixed price contract has not been completed, duration is described as "on-going".

Prison Service Union

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on his policy concerning recognition of the Prison Service Union; and what progress has been made in granting recognition.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The director general of the prison service met representatives of the Prison Service Union on 2 March for a wide-ranging discussion on prison matters. He said at that meeting that their request for recognition was being considered, but that the issues were such that an early decision was unlikely.

Convictions

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of recorded crime in Cornwall and Devon has led to successful convictions in each of the last five years for which there are figures; what were the average figures for England and for the United Kingdom for the same years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of crimes led to successful convictions in each of the last five years for which figures are available for each county; what was the average figure *(a)* for England, *(b)* for Wales and *(c)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what proportion of recorded crimes have led to successful convictions in each of the last five years for which there are figures, in each county in England and Wales; what were the average figures for England, Wales and for the United Kingdom for the same years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answers 1 and 2 March 1993]:* The information is not available. Information on recorded offences and court proceedings is compiled on different bases and a measure that combines the two therefore cannot be prepared. Figures for crimes cleared up by means of charge or summons were given in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) on 4 February at columns 291-92.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Zimbabwe

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of Zimbabwe concerning the proposed treaty on drought and desertification.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Afghanistan

Mr. Horam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how he proposes to respond to the UN Secretary General's appeal for humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government will make an immediate pledge of £7·5 million. This sum will be allocated as follows:

£3 million for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to support its programme of assistance to returning refugees from Pakistan and Iran;

£1 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross;

£1 million for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan, for mine clearance;

£1·6 million to respond to requests from non-governmental organisations involved in relief, rehabilitation and development work;

£0·9 million food aid contribution through the World Food Programme.

This pledge is in addition to over £80 million of humanitarian aid provided by Britain for Afghanistan since 1980, of which £7·55 million has been disbursed in 1992-93 in response to an earlier UN appeal.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Key: The numbers and percentages of women in the Department of National Heritage and the Historic Royal Palaces Agency in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are as follows:

Grade	Number of Staff	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
1A	1	0	0
2	—	—	—
3	4	1	25
4	1	0	0
5	19	7	37
6	8	3	38
7	52	9	17

We are able to identify the number of women amongst our staff from our basic staff records. As a new

Department, we will not, until 1 April 1993, have complete personnel records or a personnel database covering all our staff. It is our intention to carry out an ethnic origin survey and disability survey as soon as possible after that date.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps are currently taken by his Department to monitor the effectiveness of the equal opportunities provision within the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Mr. Brooke: Channel 3 and Channel 4 licences include conditions on equal opportunities for employment. The Independent Television Commission is responsible for monitoring licence conditions.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Key: Recruits to the senior grades of the Department of National Heritage, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including: extending links with institutions of higher education; equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; using validated selection procedures.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* the ethnic origins and *(b)* women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: For women, there is no need for particular surveys, as the sex of employees is identified in our basic staff records. As a new Department, we will not, until 1 April 1993, have personnel records or a personnel database covering all our staff, and it is our intention to carry out an ethnic origin survey as soon as possible after that date.

Royal Armouries Museum

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to attract private sector funding for the proposed move of the royal armouries museum to Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Department is contributing £20 million to the project, and further contributions are being made by Leeds development corporation and Leeds city council. Merchant bankers acting for the armouries have now circulated a briefing memorandum to potential investors, who will be invited to contribute the rest of the estimated cost of £42 million. The Government fully support this important project, which will bring significant benefits to Leeds.

Albert Memorial

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the condition of the fabric of the Albert memorial; and what plans he has to restore and conserve it.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* A condition survey carried out in 1991 identified the need for considerable repairs to the ironwork, leadwork, stonework, decorative tiling, statues and mosaics. A restoration scheme has therefore been prepared which addresses all these matters. The estimated cost of restoration is over £10 million. In view of the many demands on public resources at a time of very tight public expenditure control, I have had to postpone a start on this project. However, the Government remain committed to a worthy restoration of the Albert memorial. In the meantime, the protection and safety of the memorial is being assured.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Goodlad: Figures for the Diplomatic wing are:

(a) Women:

Grade	*Total staff*		*Number of women in grade*		*Women as a percentage of total in grade*	
1	7		—		—	
2	33	149	1	5	3·0	3·4
3	109		4		3·7	
4	1		—		—	
5	303		13		4·3	
6	91		6		6·6	
7	492		74		15·0	
Overall	6,400		2,265		35·4	

(b) Ethnic minorities:

Grade	*Total staff*		*Staff who have declared themselves to be of ethnic minority origin*	
			Number	*As a percentage of total in grade*[1]
1	7		—	—
2	33	149	—	—
3	109		—	—
4	1		—	—
5	303		—	—
6	91		—	—
7	492		4	0·8
Overall	6,400		170	2·7

[1] Response rate in voluntary ethnic survey: 89 per cent.

(c) The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Diplomatic Wing) employs no registered disabled staff in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 or 7. One officer at grade 5 is registered disabled (0·3 per cent. of the grade). Overall 26 staff (0·4 per cent. of the workforce) are registered disabled.

Figures for the aid wing are:

(a) Women

	Total staff	*Women*	*Per cent.*
Grades 1-3	12	0	(0)
Grade 5	51	8	(15·6)
Grade 6	87	11	(12·6)
Grade 7	249	40	(16)
Overall	1,932	830	(43)

These figures include the Natural Resources Institute.

(b) Ethnic minorities

	Total respondents	*Ethnic minority staff*	*Per cent.*
Grades 1-3	10	0	(0)
Grade 5	42	1	(2·4)
Grade 6	51	1	(2·0)
Grade 7	128	1	(0·8)
Overall	1,297	106	(8·2)

These figures exclude the Natural Resources Institute.

Disabled Staff

(c) No staff in grades 1 to 7 are disabled.
Overall 26 staff are disabled (1·34 per cent.) These figures include the Natural Resources Institute.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: Recruits to the senior grades, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service and Diplomatic Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community, including: extending links with institutions of higher education; equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; using validated selection procedures.

All recruitment advertising and literature makes clear that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is an equal opportunities employer. This message is underlined at the numerous careers events across the country at which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is represented. The diplomatic wing has set up a cadre of volunteers from amongst its staff of ethnic minority origin to represent the Department at such events. Its recruitment brochure for the fast stream of the diplomatic service includes a positive action message for women.

In the aid wing, job advertisements for all vacancies for senior positions carry a statement confirming that the Overseas Development Administration is an equal opportunities employer. By the application of published criteria, the aid wing ensures that all suitably qualified candidates are considered objectively for appointment.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* the ethnic origins and *(b)* women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office conducted their original surveys of ethnic origins in 1986. They have been continuously updated since then. The aid wing's agency, the Natural Resources Institute, is undertaking a major exercise to update its database. The gender of employees is identified in staff records. Statistics are updated at regular intervals.

Dietary Supplements

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the implications for the availability of vitamin, mineral and other dietary supplements of the agreements on subsidiarity reached at the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Commission has not tabled proposals specifically aimed at controlling dietary supplements. Any such proposals would need to be judged against the subsidiarity criteria in the normal manner.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the European Commission has yet completed the review of its work programme commenced as a result of the agreements on subsidiarity reached at the Edinburgh summit; and what information he has about the possible inclusion within that programme of the production of a directive on dietary supplements.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No; work continues. Dietary supplements was not an area specified in the Commission's initial subsidiarity review. It is not clear whether or not the Commission intends to pursue an initiative on dietary supplements.

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he possesses regarding the status of the Yongbyong nuclear facility in North Korea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg; International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors have conducted six inspections at the Yongbyon nuclear facility. They have since asked to inspect two further undeclared sites in Yongbyon, which the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have refused, in breach of their safeguards agreement with the agency.

Indonesia

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom maintains friendly and constructive relations with Indonesia. We are contributing substantially to Indonesia's development in key industrial sectors, and the opportunities for British business are enormous. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is looking forward to his visit there later this week.

Pakistan (Chieftain Tanks)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of India concerning the sale of Chieftain tanks to Pakistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There have been no representations to us by the Government of India about the possibility of the sale of Chieftain tanks to Pakistan.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if pensions earned by retired members of the Hong Kong Government now living outside Hong Kong are paid in Hong Kong dollars or in the local currency.

Mr. Goodlad: Hong Kong Government pensions are payable in Hong Kong dollars, irrespective of where the recipients reside. In the case of United Kingdom officers who have retired in the United Kingdom, they may be paid in pounds sterling by the Crown Agents at the prevailing rate of exchange.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what agreement has been reached with the Chinese Government regarding the payment of pensions to retired civil servants of the Hong Kong Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We reached the following agreement with the Chinese Government in the Sino-British Joint declaration of 1984:

"The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government shall pay to such persons (public servants) who retire or complete their contracts, as well as to those who have retired before 1 July 1997, or to their dependants, all pensions, gratuities, allowances and benefits due to them on terms no less favourable than before, and irrespective of their nationality or place of residence."

This provision is repeated in the Basic Law, the Chinese constitution for Hong Kong after 1997.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the adequacy of pension arrangements of Hong Kong retired civil servants who now live outside the colony.

Mr. Goodlad: Hong Kong Government pensioners, wherever they reside, have the option of having their pensions paid directly by the Hong Kong Government or the Crown Agents in the United Kingdom. As far as we are aware, both methods of payments have proved to be satisfactory.

Commercial Attachés

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many commercial attachés are currently serving in British embassies and high commissions overseas; in what countries; and how many had worked in industry before their appointment to the diplomatic service.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Porter) on 10 March at column 602. Commercial work is part of the responsibility of all our bilateral ambassadors and high commissioners and all our senior diplomats overseas have an understanding of the importance of commercial diplomacy and trade promotion.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from which articles, their paragraphs or their parts, Denmark is excluded from the obligations contained in title V of the treaty on European union, quoting in each instance the relevant parts of the Edinburgh decision and related treaty article.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The decision on Denmark agreed at Edinburgh clarified, although it does not alter, either the text of the treaty on European union, or the obligations taken on by those who ratify the treaty. That applies to title V of the treaty as it does to other provisions. At Edinburgh, Heads of Government noted that Denmark does not participate in the elaboration and implementation of decisions and actions of the union which have defence implications.

EC Economic and Social Committee

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the members of the United Kingdom delegation to the European Community Economic and Social Committee.

Mr. Garel-Jones:

Mr. Neville Beale
Mr. Michael Bell
Mr. John Little
Mr. Kenneth Gardner
Dr. Felix Kafka
Mr. Michael Mobbs
Dr. Ann Robinson
Mr. John Whitworth
Mr. Campbell Christie
Mr. Peter Dawson
Mr. Tom Jenkins
Mr. John Lyons
Miss Ada Maddocks
Mr. William Morris
Mr. Roy Sanderson
Mr. Alexander Smith
Mr. Wilfred Aspinall
Mrs. Jocelyn Barrow
Professor William Black
Mrs. Angela Guillaume
Mr. Robert Moreland
Mr. Michael Strauss

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy regarding the acquisition of information on possible breaches of international conventions or treaties relating to the conduct of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is collecting substantiated information about violations of international humanitarian law which will be submitted to the UN commission of experts.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the acquisition of information on possible breaches of international conventions or treaties relating to the conduct of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. However, the issue has been discussed with EC partners at regular intervals.

South Africa

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what grants or donations the Foreign Office has given to the South African Rugby Football Union in the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To mark the unification of the bodies that had previously controlled rugby union in South Africa, the British embassy in Cape Town donated 125,000 rand to the South African Rugby Football Union's township development programme in April 1992. A similar amount had previously been donated to mark the unification of the bodies controlling cricket in South Africa.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Court of Justice

Dr. Godman: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *650*, if he will list the rulings sought by courts as provided in article 177 of the treaty of Rome and the decision given by the court in each case.

The Attorney-General: Details of the cases referred to the European Court of Justice under article 177 by each of the named courts in the last five years are set out in the table.

Number of the Case	*Name of the Case*	*White Paper reference/ Law Report (if available)*
A. Magistrates Courts 9 references.		
C 118/88	Suffolk Coastal District Council *v.* Nottcutts Garden Centres Ltd.	Cm. 467
C 134/88	Solicitor for Mansfield District Council *v.* Payless DIY Ltd.	Cm. 467
C 145/88	Torfaen Borough Council *v.* B & Q plc	Cm. 1023/ (1989) ECR 3851
C 166/88	The City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council *v.* B & Q plc	Cm. 467
C 195/88	Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council *v.* B & Q plc	Cm. 641
C 232/88	Derry City Council *v.* Hampden Homecare plc	Cm. 641
C 291/88	Torfaen Borough Council *v.* Texas Homecare Ltd.	Cm. 801
C 304/90	Reading Borough Council *v.* Payless DIY Ltd. and Others	White Paper not yet published
C 116/91	Licensing Authority South Eastern Traffic Area *v.* British Gas plc	Cm. 2065/ (1992) 3 CMLR 65
B. Crown Court 4 references.		
C 23/89	Quietlynn Limited *v.* Southend Borough Council	Cm. 801/ (1990) ECR 3059
C38/90	R. *v.* Thomas Edward Lomas	Cm. 1234/ (1992) 2 CMLR 653
C 151/90	R. *v.* Fletcher Prichard and North Riding Lamb Limited	Cm. 2065
C 116/92	Huyton Wilson and Charlton *v.* Crown Prosecution Service	White Paper not yet published
C. High Court 22 references.		
C 126/88	The Boots Company plc *v.* Her Majesty's Commissioners of Customs and Excise	Cm. 1234
C 174/88	R. *v.* Dairy Produce Quota Tribunal ex parte Hall and Sons (Dairy Farmers) Ltd.	Cm. 1234
C 306/88	Rochdale Borough Council *v.* Anders	Cm. 2065
C 331/88	R. *v.* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Secretary of State for Health ex parte FEDESA	Cm. 1457/ (1990) ECR 4023
C 372/88	MMB *v.* Cricket St. Thomas Estate	Cm. 1234/ (1990) 2 CMLR 800
C 71/89 and C 72/89	R. *v.* IBAP ex parte BEOCO and Others	Cm. 1457
C 221/89	R. *v.* Secretary of State for Transport ex parte Factortame Ltd. and Others	Cm. 1857/ (1991) 3 CMLR 589
C 292/89	R. *v.* IAT ex parte Antonissen	Cm. 1657/ (1991) 2 CMLR 373
C 350/89	Sheptonhurst Ltd. *v.* Newham London Borough Council	Cm. 1657/ (1991) 3 CMLR 463
C 84/90	R. *v.* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food ex parte J. J. Dent and another	Cm. 2065/ (1992) 2 CMLR 597
C 243/90	R. *v.* Secretary of State for Social Security ex parte Smithson	Cm. 2065/ (1992) 1 CMLR 1061
C 370/90	R. *v.* IAT (1) and Surinder Singh (2) ex parte Secretary of State for the Home Department	White Paper not yet published

Number of the Case	*Name of the Case*	*White Paper reference/ Law Report (if available)*
C 9/91	R. *v.* Secretary of State for Social Security ex parte EOC	Cm. 2065
C 200/91	Coloroll Pension Trustees Ltd. *v.* J. R. Russell and Others	Cm. 2065
C 321/91	R. *v.* Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce ex parte Tara Meat Packers Ltd.	Cm. 2065
C 2/92	R. *v.* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Cm. 2065
C 11/92	R. *v.* Secretary of State for Health ex parte Gallaher Ltd. and Others	Cm. 2065
C 124/92	An Board Bainne Co-Operative Ltd. and Another *v.* IBAP	White Paper not yet published
C 128/92	H. J. Banks and Co. Ltd. *v.* British Coal Corporation	
C 275/92	Her Majesty's Customs and Excise *v.* Gerhart and Jorg Schindler	White Paper not yet published
C 432/92	R. *v.* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food ex parte S. P. Anastasious Ltd. and Others	
D. Court of Appeal 10 references		
C 262/88	Barber *v.* Guardian Royal Exchange	Cm. 1234/ (1990) 2 CMLR 513
C 301/88	R. *v.* IBAP ex parte Fish Producers Organisation	Cm. 1457/ (1990) ECR 3803
C 15/90	D. M. Middleburgh *v.* Chief Adjudication Officer	Cm. 1857/ (1992) 1 CMLR
C 1991/90	Generics (UK) Ltd. and Another *v.* Smith Kline and French Laboratories Ltd.	White Paper not yet published
C 63/91	Sonia Jackson *v.* Chief Adjudication Officer	White Paper not yet published
C 64/91	Patricia Cresswell *v.* Chief Adjudication Officer	White Paper not yet published
C 127/92	Dr. Enderby *v.* Frenchay Health Authority (1) and Secretary of State for Health (2)	White Paper not yet published
C 132/92	Mrs. F. M. Roberts *v.* Birds Eye Walls Ltd.	White Paper not yet published
C 406/92	The Owners of Cargo lately laden on board the ship "Tatry" *v.* The Owners of the Ship "Maciej Rataj"	
C 410/92	Elsie Rita Johnson *v.* Chief Adjudication Officer	
E. House of Lords 5 references		
C 188/89	Foster and Others *v.* British Gas plc	Cm. 1457/ (1990) ECR 3313
C 213/89	R. *v.* Secretary of State for Transport ex parte Factortame Limited and Others	Cm. 1234
C 169/91	Stoke and Norwich City Councils *v.* B & Q plc	Cm. 1857
C 271/91	Her Majesty's Marshall *v.* Southampton and South West Hampshire Area Health Authority	Cm. 1857
C 328/91	R. *v.* Secretary of State for Social Security ex parte Thomas and Others	Cm. 2065

Mr. Ghazanfer Ali

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *34*, what information he has received about the outcome of court proceedings in Pakistan concerning Mr. Ghazanfer Ali.

The Prime Minister: The two murder charges facing Mr. Ghanzanfer Ali were heard on 13 and 14 March. Both cases were adjourned until 8 and 12 April. We shall continue to watch developments.

World Forestry Organisation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representation he has had from Professor Ingvar Carlsson, former Prime Minister of Sweden, on the establishment of a world forestry organisation; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None. Ambassador Ola Ullsten announced at the recent global forestry conference in Indonesia an initiative to establish a world commission on forestry and sustainable development. The Ministers concerned know of the initiative and expect to receive more information about it shortly.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people respectively in top grades of employment at the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: Recruits to the senior grades, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community, including: extending links with institutions of higher education; equal opportunities training for all those involved in selection; using validated section procedures.

The Cabinet office, which has signed up domestically to Opportunity 2000, is working towards achieving the civil service-wide benchmark of increasing the proportion of women in the top three grades to 15 per cent. or more by the year 2000. The Department continually seeks to encourage the employment of people from the enthnic minorities and those with disabilities.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister when the Cabinet Office last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A survey of the ethnic origins of all non-industrial civil servants was completed in 1988. The Cabinet Office introduced a computerised personnel database in 1991. All staff were given the opportunity to update their own entries, which include sections on ethnic origins. All new staff are given the opportunity to complete an ethnic monitoring questionnaire. There are no firm plans to conduct further surveys. The sex of employees is identified in staff records.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in to the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Associations

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses and flats have been built by housing associations in the London borough of Ealing, what were the associations concerned, the locations and the cost at 1993 prices in each of the past 10 years; how many future such developments are planned and at what locations and cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not keep the detailed records which would allow me to answer this question. I have referred it to the Housing Corporation and asked it to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities in England which are debt free.

Mr. Squire: Returns to the Department indicate that the following local authorities are debt-free for the purposes of the capital control system. The list shows authorities which had no money outstanding by way of longer-term borrowing at 31 December 1992, and a nil or negative credit ceiling at 31 March 1992.

Bedford
Bracknell Forest
Broadland
Chiltern
Christchurch
City of London
Dorset
Mid Sussex
Ryedale
St. Edmundsbury
Sevenoaks
South Bucks
Swale
Tunbridge Wells
West Sussex

Avon and Somerset Police Authority
Devon and Cornwall Policy Authority
Peak Park Planning Board

Unitary Development Plans

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for which local authorities in London and the south-east of England unitary development plans *(a)* have been completed, *(b)* have not been completed, *(c)* are currently out to consultation and *(d)* are currently subject to public inquiry; and in respect of which plans he has issued his report.

Mr. Baldry: The London borough of Barnet adopted its unitary development plan in November 1991, and the London borough of Havering is due to adopt its UDP on 31 March 1993. All other London boroughs are currently preparing UDPs. Outside London, district authorities in the south-east of England do not prepare UDPs, but are required to prepare district-wide local plans.

UDPs for the London boroughs of Hillingdon, Newham, Camden and Croydon are at consultation stage; those for the London boroughs of Barking, Merton, Brent, Bexley, Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, Haringey and Lewisham are on deposit for public inspection.

The London boroughs of Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth, Richmond and Kingston are currently holding public inquiries into objections to their UDPs; the following London boroughs have completed their public inquiries: Islington, Redbridge, Sutton, Enfield, Southwark, Bromley, Greenwich, the City of London, Waltham Forest, the City of Westminster, Harrow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hackney and Ealing.

Following a public inquiry, the inspector makes his recommendations direct to the local authority. The Secretary of State does not issue reports in respect of development plans.

Council Tax

Mr Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the amounts of council tax transitional relief granted to each *(a)* London borough, *(b)* other metropolitan boroughs and *(c)* other local authorities in England; and what is the amount of transitional relief as a percentage of the total transitional relief granted.

Mr. Squire: Authorities have been invited to submit claims for council tax transitional reduction scheme grant for 1993-94. We have no estimates of the amount of each authority's grant entitlement.

Birds

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Joint Nature Conservancy Council inventory of marine sites of importance to birds to be produced.

Mr. Maclean: At present the Joint Nature Conservation Committee has no plans to produce such an inventory. The former Nature Conservancy Council published survey results of the most important areas for seabirds in the North sea and west of Britain, in 1987 and 1990 respectively. The JNCC's remaining survey work in the English channel and south-west approaches is about to be completed.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to safeguard the wider coastal and marine environment under the EC habitats and species directive.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's proposals for implementing the EC habitats and species directive will be issued in due course.

Coastal Zones

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken by his officials to pursue the proposed EC directive on coastal zone planning and management.

Mr. Maclean: At present, the Commission has not published a proposed directive on coastal zone planning. The Government will take an active part in seeking to ensure that any proposals that come forward are workable and effective.

Rented Property

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation that requires landlords to ensure regular servicing of appliances fitted within their properties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations 1990 require managers of houses in multiple occupation to observe proper standards of management and to keep existing facilities in good repair. These facilities include gas and electric appliances, and sanitary and cooking facilities. Failure to comply with the regulations is a criminal offence.

Private landlords also have certain statutory obligations to carry out repairs and maintenance under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. These include ensuring that the installations for the supply of gas and electricity and for space and water heating are kept in proper working order.

Homelessness

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory responsibility local authorities have to offer homeless families a choice in the type of temporary accommodation they are offered.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities have no statutory responsibility to offer a choice of temporary accommodation; this is a matter for their discretion in the light of local circumstances.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision he is making for the homeless people about to be evicted from the cold weather shelters; and how many beds are currently provided by those shelters.

Mr. Baldry: Under the Government's £96 million rough sleepers initiative, we have provided funding of £1·5 million for this year's winter shelter programme, which at its height provided 400 extra bedspaces in nine winter shelters in central London. The purpose of the winter shelter programme was only to provide shelter for people in central London who would otherwise sleep rough over the winter months. The shelters will close at the end of March.

Currently, around 170 of the 400 places are still in use; over 50 of these people have accepted offers of other accommodation, and the voluntary organisations running the shelters are continuing to help find alternative accommodation for those that remain. In doing so, they will be assisted by two new hostels funded under the RSI which opened this month, and which will provide a further 100 bed spaces; by vacancies in other London hostels; and by an estimated 100 units of permanent accommodation provided under the RSI becoming available in the last two weeks of March.

East Thames Corridor

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total public funding being committed to his plans to encourage development on the east Thames corridor.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's preferred approach to the east Thames corridor is to put in place a planning framework which will seek to maximise the development benefits of public investment in infrastructure and urban regeneration over the next 20 years. It is not possible to estimate the total of public expenditure in the area over that period.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what effect the census validation survey has on the distribution of the standard spending assessments of population estimates for local authorities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of grant through the standard spending assessment

formula population estimates to metropolitan district authorities of the under-enumeration formulas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Squire: The effect of the census validation survey has been to ensure that the mid-1991 population figures produced by the registrar general for use in the calculation of standard spending assessments are as accurate as possible.

We have looked most carefully at the mid-1991 population figures based on the 1991 census results, given their implications for standard spending assessments and revenue support grant entitlements. We are satisfied that the methods the registrar general has employed to produce these estimates, particularly in relation to the allocation of census under-enumeration, are the most appropriate in the circumstances and do not disadvantage metropolitan or any other class of authorities.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to adjust the standard spending assessments population estimates for Leeds and Wakefield because of the under-enumeration following the OPCS survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Squire: The provisional mid-1991 population figures used in the calculation of the 1993-94 standard spending assessments already include allowances for the under-enumeration identified from the OPCS census validation survey.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses to allocate under-enumerations of population to local authorities for standard spending assessment purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Squire: It is the registrar general who is responsible for preparing the population figures used in the calculation of standard spending assessments, including the formulation of criteria for allocating estimates of under-enumeration to local authority areas. He has set out the methods used to compile his figures in the OPCS monitor PP1 92/1, a copy of which is in the Library.

Landfill

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the preliminary study prepared by Cooper and Lybrand on the subject of a levy on landfills and licensed rubbish dumps.

Mr. Maclean: A copy of the report "Landfill Costs and Prices: Correcting Possible Market Distortions" by Coopers and Lybrand was placed in the Library of the House on 9 February 1993.

Urban Programme

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources will be made available for the urban programme in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Squire: I am pleased to announce a substantial urban programme funding package for 1993-94. Allocations to the 57 urban programme authorities in England for 1993-94 total £163 million. These resources will fund projects which have been approved in this and previous financial years. The allocations are set out in the table.

An additional £20 million is being provided for urban partnership fund projects as part of the new capital partnership programme. Successful project bids under this initiative were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend, on 12 February 1993 [*Official Report* columns 834-35]. Together with the £232 million being made available for city challenge, resources will rise by £90 million to £408 million in 1993-94.

Urban programme allocation 1993-94

	£ million
Newcastle	5·340
Gateshead	5·272
Hartlepool	1·309
Langbaurgh	1·331
Middlesbrough	3·325
North Tyneside	2·231
South Tyneside	3·158
Stockton	1·280
Sunderland	3·317
Manchester	9·048
Salford	4·529
Blackburn	2·115
Bolton	2·253
Burnley	1·396
Oldham	2·554
Preston	1·210
Rochdale	2·475
Wigan	1·704
Liverpool	12·364
Halton	0·968
Knowsley	2·615
St. Helens	1·185
Sefton	1·000
Wirral	2·340
Birmingham	14·847
Coventry	3·065
Dudley	1·030
Sandwell	3·148
Walsall	1·051
Wolverhampton	3·522
The Wrekin	0·634
Derby	0·837
Leicester	3·143
Nottingham	3·530
Barnsley	1·342
Bradford	3·002
Doncaster	1·288
Hull	3·265
Kirklees	0·724
Leeds	3·473
Rotherham	1·486
Sheffield	3·940
Hackney	3·425
Islington	5·873
Lambeth	5·863
Brent	1·436
Greenwich	1·112
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·707
Haringey	2·012
Kensington and Chelsea	1·202
Lewisham	1·530
Newham	1·974
Southwark	1·826
Tower Hamlets	3·083
Wandsworth	2·110

	£ million
Bristol	1·109
Plymouth	0·925
Total	162·834

Greater London Council

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bodies, elected or appointed institutions or other groups now administer the responsibilities previously discharged under the auspices of the Greater London council; and if he will list the function of each.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The responsibilities of the Greater London council were transferred to a number of existing or new successor authorities on 1 April 1986. The London residuary body issued in 1987 a booklet entitled "London Now" summarising in general terms which services and duties went to which authorities. I have arranged for a copy of the booklet to be deposited in the Library. On 1 April 1990 each inner London council became the local education authority for its area on abolition of the Inner London education authority. Functions inherited by the LRB as a consequence of the abolition of the GLC and of the ILEA and subsequently disposed of by them are reported in the LRB's annual reports which are laid before Parliament, copies of which are in the Library.

Hedgerows

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many agreements have so far been entered into under the hedgerow incentive scheme; what is the total length of hedgerow involved and the amount of money involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1992]:* As at 26 March 1993, 481 agreements had been made under the scheme since it was launched in July 1992, as a result of which some 640 km of hedgerow will be restored over the next five years. I will write to the hon. Member with regard to the anticipated cost of these works.

Palm House, Sefton Park

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the environment when he will meet members of the action committee to save the palm house in Sefton park; what funds are available for the continued refurbishment of the palm house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The hon. Member will remember, that I wrote to him in November of last year, agreeing to meet with himself, Liverpool city council and members of the save the palm house committee. Since then, an urban programme grant has been approved in January 1993 and has secured the safety of the palm house structure and provided Liverpool city council with an opportunity to explore further options for the long-term future of the building and its environs.

With this in mind, the city council's planning and development services department has proposals to establish a joint council/voluntary sector action committee of its own. However, this is at a preliminary stage and subject to approval by the city council. Once this is formalised, a meeting can then be arranged.

Toxic Waste Imports

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consider holding an inquiry into the commercial trade in toxic waste with particular reference to trade between Germany and the United Kingdom;

(2) what representations he is making to the European Commission regarding the import of toxic waste going from Germany to the ReChem plant in Pontypool;

(3) if he will consider preventing the import of toxic waste from Germany to the ReChem plant at Pontypool;

(4) what ports in the United Kingdom will handle the proposed imports of toxic waste from Germany destined for the ReChem plant in Pontypool.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* I see no need for such an inquiry. The UK Government have asked the German Government to ban the proposed shipment of hazardous waste from Hamburg. The UK's policy of self-sufficiency in final disposal for developed countries has been incorporated into the EC waste shipments regulation coming into operation in May 1994. I understand that the proposed shipment would be handled at Hull.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statutory provisions governs the responsibility of the Welsh Development Agency in respect of the conservation of flora, fauna, landscape and physiographical features.

Mr. David Hunt: The agency is subject to the same provisions as apply to other public bodies.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which members of the Welsh Development Agency since 1975 were appointed because of their experience of and capacity in matters relating to the environment;

(2) if he will list the existing members of the Welsh Development Agency showing which have experience of, and have shown capacity in, industry, commerce, banking, accountancy, finance, the organisation of representation of workers, administration, local government and matters relating to the environment respectively.

Mr. David Hunt: Appointments to the board of the agency are made on the basis of an individual's overall experience and expertise and having regard to the terms of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975. Such appointments are rarely dependent on a single attribute.

Each of the current members of the board brings a wide range of skills and expertise to the agency. Current membership is as follows:

Dr. Gwyn Jones—*Chairman*
Dr. Roy Bichan—*Deputy Chairman*
Sir Donald Walters
Mr. E. Glyn Davies[1]
Mr Richard Brewster
Mr. John Foley MBE
Mr. David Malpas
Dr. Pamela Kirby
Mr. Philip Head[2]—*Chief Executive*

[1] Ex officio member as Chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales.

[2] In accordance with the requirements of the WDA Act 1975, the WDA Chief Executive is appointed a member of the WDA Board.

Breast Screening

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which places the mammography screening service has visited in 1992 and 1993 to date; and where the service is currently planned to visit during the remainder of 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Breast Test Wales provides a breast screening service throughout Wales. Detailed information about the mobile screening programme in 1992 together with current and planned programmes for 1993 is not held centrally. This is available from the director of Breast Test Wales who is responsible for the management and delivery of the service.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria the mammography screening service has adopted in choosing the places it has visited to date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In line with national guidelines for breast screening, Breast Test Wales is working to a three-yearly screening cycle. Within these parameters, it is for the director of Breast Test Wales to provide the service taking into account support services and geographical planning.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many places the mammography screening service in Wales has visited on more than one occasion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Following completion of the first three-year screening cycle in parts of south-east Wales, I understand that second round screening has begun in that area. Information about the locations involved can be obtained from the director of Breast Test Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for the mammography screening service to visit Merthyr Tydfil during 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The decision about which locations the mobile screening service will visit in 1993 and beyond is the responsibility of the director of Breast Test Wales.

European Community Funds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to secure that supplementary credit approvals for local authorities in Wales in 1993-94 on European regional development fund and RECHAR moneys are applied in line with the additionality principle.

Mr. David Hunt: Officials wrote to all local authorities on 20 January informing them of the arrangements which will apply to the issue of supplementary credit approvals to cover all ERDF grant-related expenditure incurred by them from 1 April 1993.

ReChem Incinerator (Emissions)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the statement made by the parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on toxic waste monitoring, *Official Report*, 10 July 1992, column 777, if he will specify the form of the investigation into the Gwent farmer's complaints about airborne emissions from the ReChem incinerator.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Between 1982 and 1984, various samples were collected by the farmer's veterinary surgeons and examined at veterinary investigation centres or at a private veterinary laboratory. In addition, senior veterinary officers from the veterinary investigation service made a number of visits to the farm in question. It was concluded that there was ample evidence to support the view that the animal problems were caused by common disease conditions.

Community Councils

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of all community councils in Wales by district showing the electorate in each case.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Housing (Garden City)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet Alyn and Deeside district council to discuss housing problems in Garden city, Deeside.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The hon. Gentleman will recall that my right hon. Friend met him and a delegation of members from the council to discuss a number of their concerns, including resources for housing, on 26 January. Welsh Office officials are meeting representatives of Alyn and Deeside district council today to discuss the full range of their housing problems and plans.

Badger Setts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of badger setts, by county, closed or otherwise, seriously interfered with by or under licence from his Department's officials between 18 January and 15 March.

Mr. David Hunt: During the period in question, two licences were issued by the Department permitting interference with one badger sett in Clwyd and one in Gwynedd.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications he has received under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 to enter dogs into setts; how many have been granted; and when, where and for what purpose.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department has received four applications for licences to permit the entry of dogs into badger setts, only one of which has been approved. On 12 March, a licence was granted to allow the introduction of a dog into a sett near Denbigh, Clwyd for fox control purposes.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what conditions he has applied to licences granted for the purpose of entering dogs into badger setts.

Mr. David Hunt: The conditions for the one licence issued were that the licence was valid for a single day, that

a wildlife expert from the agricultural development and advisory service would be in attendance and that the operation should cease if there was any evidence of disturbance to badgers.

Pit Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for increases in the budgets of the training and enterprise councils in the areas covered by pit closures in Wales for specific additional training schemes for former coal miners affected by the coal industry pit closure programme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have announced resources of over £106 million in 1993-94 for TECs in Wales—a massive investment enabling them to have on offer a range of opportunities including skills training at all levels and support for those wishing to start their own businesses. I will continue to review provision with the TECs in the light of developments in those areas relevant to the coal review.

NHS Trusts (Pay Levels)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what analysis he has made of the salary percentage increases of top management in NHS trusts to take effect from 1 April; what assessment he has made of the impact of the Chancellor's 1·5 per cent. upper limit for public sector pay for 1993 on the pay increases for *(a)* top management, *(b)* senior medical staff, *(c)* nursing and *(d)* auxiliary staff in trust hospitals and other trust provider units in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: NHS staff including all those employed by NHS trusts are subject to the current public sector pay policy restricting settlements in the 1993 pay round to a maximum of 1·5 per cent. Offers made to date to staff groups covered by the pay review body and Whitley arrangements are within this limit.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what instructions he has issued to Welsh training and enterprise councils in relation to the submission of claims for invoices at *(a)* project approval stage and *(b)* expenditure incurred stage; what guidelines he has issued as to the proper procedure if any TECs have been paid on the basis of claims submitted at project approval stage and in advance in need; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The TEC operating agreement sets out the procedures to be followed by TECs when submitting claims. TECs have recently been reminded to examine their systems to ensure that the terms of the TEC operating agreement are being met.

Hospital Waiting Times

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made towards meeting the guarantee on hospital waiting times under the patients charter in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Significant progress has been made in reducing waiting times in line with the patient's charter guarantees. The number waiting over one month for urgent hospital treatment is expected to have fallen from 717 in March 1992 to nil or virtually nil by the end of March 1993.

By the end of this month, health authorities expect to have eliminated the waiting lists over 18 months for hip and knee replacements and cataract operations.

The number of people waiting over two years for non-urgent treatment fell from 2,251 in March 1992 to 1,528 last September. During February, the number fell to 933 and it is estimated to have fallen during this month to about 100. If any are still outstanding at the end of this month, all will have been offered firm admission dates.

This represents a magnificent achievement by Welsh health authorities.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxpayers

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the tax liabilities of taxpayers in 1993-94 *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding the effects of changes in national insurance contributions compared with what their liability would be under the indexed 1987-88 income tax regime, giving figures for the top and bottom (i) percentile, (ii) 5 per cent., (iii) decile, (iv) quintile and (v) 50 per cent. of taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates are given in the table.

£ million

	Tax liability under		*Tax and national insurance liability under*	
	1993-94 regime	*1987-88 regime indexed to 1993-94*	*1993-94 regime*	*1987-88 regime indexed to 1993-94*
Taxpayers under the 1987-88 indexed regime				
Top 1 per cent.	9,300	12,500	9,600	12,800
Top 5 per cent.	19,300	23,300	20,900	25,000
Top 10 per cent.	26,000	30,600	29,300	34,100
Top 20 per cent.	35,700	41,400	42,100	48,400
Top 50 per cent.	52,500	60,500	65,400	75,000
Bottom 50 per cent.	8,100	10,100	12,100	14,900
Bottom 20 per cent.	1,000	1,400	1,700	2,300
Bottom 10 per cent.	230	330	480	630
Bottom 5 per cent.	60	80	160	210

Information for the bottom 1 per cent. of taxpayers is not available. The 1987-88 income tax regime has been

indexed to 1993-94 levels by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for independent taxation. For the purpose of the calculations the indexed regime of 1987-88 has been applied directly to the income base of 1993-94. In practice, retention of the 1987-88 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *691*, showing changes in tax and national insurance liability compared with an indexed 1987-88 tax regime, giving an estimate for 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates of the average reductions in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the table. The 1987-88 income tax regime has been indexed to 1993-94 levels by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for independent taxation. For the purpose of the calculations the indexed regime of 1987-88 has been applied directly to the income base of 1993-94. In practice, retention of the 1987-88 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Average change in 1993-94 compared with 1987-88 indexed regime

Range of individual's income in 1993-94 £	*Income tax* £	*Income tax and national insurance* £
Under 5,000	60	70
5,000-10,000	170	240
10,000-15,000	260	400
15,000-20,000	340	470
20,000-25,000	430	550
25,000-30,000	500	610
30,000-40,000	430	530
40,000-50,000	920	1,010
50,000-70,000	2,400	2,480
70,000-80,000	5,130	5,200
Over 80,000	19,200	19,200
Average	400	480

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total proceeds from value added tax in each year since 1978-79, at 1993 prices; and what are the projections for each year to 1995-96.

Sir John Cope: The VAT proceeds at 1992 prices are as follows:

Year	*Revenue £ Billions*
1978-79	13·1
1979-80	19·2
1980-81	22·1
1981-82	21·3
1982-83	23·4
1983-84	24·5
1984-85	28·4
1985-86	28·0
1986-87	30·0
1987-88	32·4
1988-89	34·8
1989-90	34·8
1990-91	33·4
1991-92	36·6
1992-93	[1]37·0
1993-94	[2]39·0

[1] Latest estimate.
[2] Forecast.

Forecasts are not available beyond 1993-94. 1993 prices are not yet available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount of unpaid VAT written off by HM Customs and Excise for the last five years for which figures are available.

Sir John Cope: VAT write-offs are scheduled on a calendar year basis. A "written off" amount is where, for accounting purposes, a tax liability is removed from the records. However, the liability is not extinguished and may, if at a later stage circumstances change, be resurrected. The audited figures for the last five years are:

Year	*£'000*
1987	214,123
1988	209,471
1989	173,981
1990	208,024
1991	[1]512,284

[1] The figure for 1991 includes some £80 million written-off following a special review of long standing debts on the VAT ledger.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his plans to extend VAT to domestic fuel will include standing charges on gas and electricity bills.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 26 March at column *746*.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for each region *(a)* the total increase in household costs, *(b)* the average household cost and *(c)* the average proportion of household income that will be consumed by his proposed extension of value added tax to heating costs (i) in 1994-95 and (ii) in 1995-96.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many traders were deregistered for value added tax because they had ceased trading in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Sir John Cope: The numbers of traders who were deregistered for value added tax because they had ceased trading in 1990-91 and 1991-92 are as follows:

	Number
1990-91	119,486
1991-92	114,372

Corporation Tax

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what forecasts have been produced by the Inland Revenue for corporation tax receipts for 1992-93

and 1993-94 from *(a)* the major clearing banks, *(b)* other banks, *(c)* insurance companies, *(d)* other financial institutions and *(e)* privatised companies;

(2) what was the estimate of corporation tax receipts forecast in 1990 by the Inland Revenue for the banks for 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what were the actual receipts of corporation tax from the banks for these years.

Mr. Dorrell: Forecasts of the yield of corporation tax, and of advance corporation tax, are published annually in the Financial Statement and Budget Report issued on Budget day. It is not normal practice to release forecasts in the detail requested.

Tax Remission

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in how many cases *(a)* inheritance tax and *(b)* capital gains tax was remitted or written off as irrecoverable for each year since 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: The total number of cases and amounts of inheritance tax and capital gains tax remitted off or written off by the Inland Revenue for each year since 1989 (figures for 1992 are not yet available) is as follows:

	INHERITANCE TAX		*CAPITAL TAX GAINS*	
	Number of cases	*Nearest £*	*Number of cases*	*Nearest £ thousand*
1989	10	70,730	5,449	10,856,000
1990	34	225,549	6,492	12,076,000
1991	35	413,038	8,418	29,721,000

Debtor Countries

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many countries have had their official debt to the United Kingdom written off.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 22 March 1993]:* Thirty-eight countries have received some form of official bilateral debt or debt service reduction from the United Kingdom Government. Twenty-three countries have received retrospective terms adjustment from the Overseas Development Administration entirely transforming old aid loans into grants. The Export Credits Guarantee Department has participated in debt restructurings on Toronto terms with 18 countries involving debt or debt service forgiveness equivalent to a one-third reduction in the present value of eligible debt, and restructurings on Trinidad terms with 13 countries involving debt or debt service forgiveness equivalent to one half reduction in the present value of eligible debt. In addition, two exceptional debt restructurings have been agreed with Poland and Egypt which reduce the present value of the stock of these countries eligible by 50 per cent. The details are set out in the table.

ODA RTA	*Toronto terms*	*Trinidad terms*	*Exceptional treatment*
Afghanistan			
Bangladesh			
	Benin	Benin	
Bolivia	Bolivia	Bolivia	
Botswana			
	Burkina Faso		
	Central African Rep		
Ethiopia		Ethiopia	
Egypt			Egypt
Gambia			
Ghana			
	Guinea-Bissau		
	Guinea Republic	Guinea Republic	
	Guyana		
Honduras			
Indonesia			
Kenya			
Lesotho			
	Madagascar		
Malawi			
	Mali	Mali	
	Mauritania	Mauritania	
Mozambique	Mozambique	Mozambique	
Nepal			
		Nicaragua	
	Niger		
Pakistan			
			Poland
Senegal	Senegal		
Sri Lanka			
Sudan			
Tanzania			
	Tanzania	Tanzania	
	Togo	Togo	
Uganda	Uganda	Uganda	
Western Samoa			
	Zaire		
	Zambia	Zambia	
23	18	13	2

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on instructions he has given to recover public funds from Barlow Clowes by means of legal proceedings against the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Nelson: An application in the names of the Treasury, Barlow Clowes liquidators and receivers, and others for leave to serve proceedings against BCCI is pending before the court. It would not be appropriate to comment on this or any other action arising out of the Barlow Clowes affair which is before the court.

European Community (Convergence)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what requests he has received from institutions of the European Community for a report on their programme for attaining convergence within the economies of the Community; what reply has been sent; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom presented a convergence programme in November 1991. A copy of this programme was placed in the House of Commons Library. It is our intention to submit an updated convergence programme during 1993.

Equatorial Bank

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons for closing the Equatorial bank.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* No. I understand that the decision to petition for administration was taken by the Equatorial's directors.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to hold an inquiry into the events surrounding the closure of the Equatorial bank.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* I have no such plans.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when and by whom he was first informed of the problems that subsequently led to the closure of the Equatorial bank; and when he was first informed that the Equatorial bank was to be closed.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* As the Bingham report makes clear, information on supervisory matters is passed to the Treasury by the Bank of England at a number of levels. However, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on individual institutions.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the meetings, during the last year, he has had at which the Equatorial bank was discussed.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* I hold meetings from time to time with the governor or with my officials at which banking supervision issues are discussed. It would not be appropriate for me to disclose whether or not a particular institution was mentioned at any such meeting. Equatorial was, however, raised briefly by the hon. Gentleman at a meeting we had on 23 March.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Strip Searching

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what security risks necessitate the use of strip searching in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: The purpose of the full searching of prisoners in Northern Ireland is to detect items such as explosives, weapons and drugs, in order to reduce the risk of escape and the potential for injury to prisoners, staff and visitors.

RUC (Disabled Personnel)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve have been physically disabled as a result of terrorism to date; how many have been retrained and re-employed by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland; and what opportunities are available for retraining and re-employment within the Royal Ulster Constabulary for personnel disabled in service.

Mr. Mates *[holding reply sent on 10 March 1993]:* The term "physically disabled" is difficult to define precisely, but current RUC records in relation to injuries as a result of terrorist attacks indicate that since 1970 a total of 7,025 officers have been injured as a result of terrorism. Of these, 121 have been granted medical retirement due to the extent of their injuries/illness.

The Police Authority for Northern Ireland does not currently have the facility to retrain RUC officers for further employment. A serving or ex-RUC officer may apply in open competition through the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission for employment in the civil service, including secondment to the police authority. There are currently six civil servants employed by the police authority who retired on medical grounds from the RUC. Information as to how many such officers have been employed since 1970 is not readily available.

Where possible, the RUC, through its welfare branch and occupational health unit provides support and rehabilitation for injured officers. This service extends to the provision of counselling help to the injured officers' families. In addition, the RUC benevolent fund provides continuing support for the officer and the family in both financial and social aspects of the trauma. However, the RUC does not have the facilities to re-train or re-employ every officer injured as a result of terrorism. Where a recovery period is required or where illness dictates (including sickness not related to terrorism), officers may be employed on restricted duties. On 10 March 1993, a total of 80 officers who had been injured as a result of terrorism were employed on restricted duties. This total includes a small number of disabled officers who, although eligible, decided not to seek medical retirement from the force.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Blood Donation

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what plans he has better to promote the opportunities for the giving of blood by all those who work in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Michael Martin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 14 January, *Official Report*, col. *440*, which detailed the arrangements provided in the Treasury where Members, their staff and staff of the House may give blood. Those apart, a proposal from the North London blood transfusion service that its mobile unit should be parked in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster is currently before the Administration Committee.

Printing and Publication Costs

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what is the approximate cost per page to the House of printing and publishing one page of the Notice Paper and of the Order Paper.

Mr. Michael J. Martin *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* A number of copies of the Vote bundle is supplied to the House either complete or in various, pre-determined combinations of its 11 main sections. The page content of each section varies widely from day to day and Her Majesty's Stationery Office charges the House 18p for each page of every copy supplied.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many pages of the *Official Report* have been devoted to *(a)* oral and written questions to the right hon. Member answering on behalf of the Church Commissioners and *(b)* to the passage of Church of England measures, in sessions 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93 to date; and what was the approximate cost to the *Official Report* of the preparation, printing and publishing of such pages.

Mr. Michael J. Martin *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* The price of the daily *Official Report* does not vary with page content. Over the period in question, it has been £6 for session 1990-91 and £7·50 for sessions 1991-92 and 1992-93. Information on the number of pages devoted to questions to the Church Commissioners and to Church of England measures and on the cost of their preparation by the Department of the *Official Report* is as follows:

Oral and written questions (Church Commissioners) and Church of England Measures [Costs incurred by the Department of the Official Report]

	Number of pages	*Number of questions*	*Preparation costs £*
Oral questions			
1990-91	7·2	18	79·92
1991-92	3·2	7	31·08
1992 to date	3·75	12	53·28
Totals	14·15	37	164·28
Written questions			
1990-91	3·35	19	35·91
1991-92	0·65	4	7·56
1992 to date	3·6	26	49·14
Totals	7·6	49	92·61
Church of England measures			
1990-91	10·25	n/a	175·50
1991-92	8·75	n/a	141·75
1992 to date	nil	n/a	nil
Totals	19	—	317·25

SCOTLAND

Badger Setts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of badger setts, by county, closed or otherwise, seriously interfered with by or under licence from his Department's officials between 18 January and 15 March.

Sir Hector Monro: None.

Forestry

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he plans to carry out the proposed review of incentives for forestry.

Mr. Lang: I and my fellow Ministers are keen to improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives in line with my statement on forestry in September 1991. We gave a commitment in the manifesto to review the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, and this will be completed by the end of the year.

We have established a small group of officials, with representatives from the Treasury, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Welsh Office, Department of the Environment and the Forestry Commission, under Scottish Office chairmanship, to review the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, to review options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands and to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to the Government's other economic and environmental policies.

Stracathro hospital

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current costs of providing accident and emergency services at Stracathro hospital; and what are the average costs for Tayside and Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: In 1991-92, average costs per accident and emergency attendance were:

	£
Stracathro hospital	45·00
Tayside health board	34·24
Scotland	34·96

Community Midwives

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers and location of general practitioner community midwife schemes for each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many community midwives there are in each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table.

NHS Community Midwives by Health Board: head count at 30 September 1992[1]

	Community midwives	*Combined duty nurses*[2]
Scotland	298	591
Argyll and Clyde	36	49
Ayrshire and Arran	37	2
Borders	—	56
Dumfries and Galloway	6	45
Fife	24	—
Forth Valley	21	14
Grampian	13	85
Greater Glasgow	49	21
Highland	12	148
Lanarkshire	28	29
Lothian	61	2
Orkney	—	17
Shetland	—	19
Tayside	11	64
Western Isles	—	40

[1] Data are provisional.
[2] Staff who practise more than one profession:
health visitors/district nurses/community midwives,
district nurses/community midwives,
health visitors/community midwives.

Brackletter Waste Disposal Site

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will announce a decision on the compulsory purchase order for the Brackletter waste disposal site, Spean Bridge, Invernesshire.

Sir Hector Monro: I expect the decision on the compulsory purchase order for the Brackletter waste disposal site to be issued shortly.

MV Havkong

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the investigations he is carrying out into all aspects of the incident on 23 January in Braefoot bay, involving MV Havkong.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* Marine safety is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The incident is the subject of investigations being carried out by the Department of Transport's marine accident investigation branch and the Health and Safety Executive. The Scottish Office is not carrying out any separate investigation but close contact is being maintained with the Department of Transport.

Housing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of its 1992-93 budget Scottish Homes has spent to date; if he will break this figure down by Scottish region and by category of expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* To date, Scottish Homes has spent £315 million of its total budget in 1992-93, representing 89 per cent. of the total budget. The breakdown by Scottish Homes district and by programme category is as follows:

District	*Expenditure £ million*
Highlands' Islands and Grampian	26·3
Tayside and Fife	41·0
Lanark and Central	37·2
Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders	41·0
North and South Clyde	54·3
City of Glasgow	99·5
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	15·7
TOTAL	315

Programme category	*Expenditure £ million*
Partnership Areas	22·7
Inner City	66·4
Outer City	36·9
Smaller Urban Renewal	7·4
Urban Areas	74·6
Rural Areas	42·6
New Towns	3·2
Own Stock	61·2
TOTAL	315

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the most recent figures for empty local authority housing in Scotland for *(a)* up to six months, *(b)* up to 12 months and *(c)* over one year; and if he will list the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The latest information on empty local authority housing in Scotland is published in table 17 of the statistical bulletin HSG/1992/8, "Housing Trends in Scotland—Quarter ended 30 June 1992". The bulletin is available in the House Library.

Stracathro Hospital

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the estimated costs of transferring accident and emergency services from Stracathro hospital to Dundee hospitals.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Most major trauma cases are already referred directly to the specialist Accident and Emergency centre in Dundee. Any transfer of the remaining cases together with the out-of-hours service could be absorbed within the existing Dundee hospitals at no extra cost.

The Scottish ambulance service is currently examining the effects of the planned changes to determine whether it will incur additional costs.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the estimated annual savings in transferring accident and emergency services from Stracathro hospital to Dundee hospitals.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The Board's proposal to transfer of accident and emergency service from Stracathro to Dundee is based on grounds of improving quality rather than in terms of cost-effectiveness. In practice much major trauma is already diverted to Dundee. I understand, however, that Tayside health board estimates that it could save around £98,000 from proposed service changes.

Timeshare properties

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the proposed classification of non-commercial timeshare properties as non-domestic for the purposes of calculating council tax.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* Before making the Council Tax (Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 1993, which define timeshare units as non-domestic property, we received representations from the Timeshare Council, the Scandinavian Village Association, the Melfort Club and three others. In the period since the regulations were made, on 8 March, up to 26 March, we received representations concerning the regulations from 98 Members of Parliament and four other individuals.

Women Prisoners

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland of those women in prison in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992 respectively, how many were imprisoned for (i) violence against the person, (ii) sexual offences, (iii) burglary, (iv) robbery, (v) theft, resettling, embezzlement, fraud and forgery, (vi) drug offences and (vii) other offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The table sets out the number of female receptions to penal establishments using the best available approximations in The Scottish Office classification of crimes and offences to the categories listed. Information is not available for 1992.

The number of female receptions to Scottish penal establishments by type of offence, 1990-91

	1990	1991
Violence against the person	52	45
Sexual offences	1	1
Burglary	11	16
Robbery	4	4
Theft, resetting, embezzlement, fraud and forgery	340	390
Drugs	16	14
Other crimes and offences	95	108
Total receptions	519	578

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland of those women in prison in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992, how many were serving sentences of (i) up to 18 months, (ii) between 18 months and three years, (iii) between three years and five years and (iv) five years or more.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The available information is set out in the table:

Average daily female prison population in Scottish penal establishments by length of sentence, 1990-1992

Length of sentence	1990	1991	[1]1992
Less than 18 months	71	84	90
18 months or more but less than three years	4	4	9
Three years or more but less than five years	10	6	5
Five years or more	16	17	16
Others[2]	37	32	37
Total[3]	137	143	158

[1] Provisional.
[2] Includes females held on remand, recalled, etc.
[3] Components may not add up to the total due to rounding.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women were in prison in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992; and of that total how many were (i) juveniles, (ii) young adults under 25 years and (iii) adults.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The available information is set out in the table:

Average daily female prison population in Scottish penal establishments by type of prisoner, 1990-1992

Year	Adult	Young offenders[1]	Total[2]
1990	112	26	137
1991	122	22	143
[3]1992	139	19	158

[1] Young offenders are aged between 16 and 21 but a small number are held in a young offenders institution up to the age of 23.
[2] Components may not add up to the total due to rounding.
[3] Provisional.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits for 1992-93 within his responsibility.

Mr. Lang *[pursuant to his reply, 4 February 1993, column 307]:* The revised cash limit for the non-voted cash limit SO/LA1, which covers non-housing capital expenditure by local authorities is £652,087,000 and not £653,587,000.

Natural Heritage

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met non-governmental environmental organisations to discuss matters relating to Scotland's natural heritage.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Scottish Office Ministers meet representatives of non-government environmental organisations including Rural Forum and the Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link at

formal meetings, visits and other occasions. Most recently I met representatives concerned with conservation in agriculture on Friday 19 March; and with the Scottish Conservation Projects Trust on Monday 22 March. In addition my officials also have regular contact with these and other non-government environmental organisations.

Edinburgh Dental School and Hospital

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all decisions taken by his Department since 1979 concerning the future of the Edinburgh dental school and hospital.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* In 1989 a working party established under the chairmanship of Sir Donald McCallum recommended the closure of the Edinburgh dental school and the establishment of a new dental hospital and postgraduate dental institute for Edinburgh. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State endorsed this proposal and gave a commitment to provide such capital investment as is necessary to establish both the new dental hospital and the postgraduate institute. That commitment stands.

EDUCATION

Teachers' Pay

4. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the increase in average teacher salaries since 1979 after allowing for inflation.

Mr. Patten: Since this Government came into office in 1979, the average teacher's pay has increased by some 46 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation.

Religious Education

18. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his Department is doing to ensure that schools are complying with the guidelines for religious education.

Mr. Patten: To ensure that all local agreed syllabuses are brought into line with the Education Reform Act 1988, the current Education Bill proposes that all local authorities review their syllabus within one year of Royal Assent, unless they have done so since 1988, and every five years subsequently.

New inspection arrangements will highlight publicly instances where schools are failing to provide religious education and governing bodies will be required to prepare action plans to address difficulties raised by inspection reports.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the National Curriculum Council's report, "Analysis of Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education"; and what immediate steps he will take to ensure that agreed syallabuses comply with the provision of the Education Reform Act 1988 requiring religious education to be in the main Christian;

(2) if he will issue further guidelines as to the operation of the provision of the Education Reform Act 1988 requiring religious education to be in the main Christian.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend strongly supports the National Curriculum Council's work in assisting local conferences to decide how best to bring their agreed syllabuses into line with the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act. We are proposing, in the current Education Bill, to require local authorities to review all local agreed syllabuses not reviewed since the passage of that Act, and to review them every five years subsequently.

My right hon. Friend plans to issue a revised circular of guidance after the passage of the Bill through Parliament.

Corporal Punishment

19. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is taking to end corporal punishment in schools.

Mr. Forth: Corporal punishment is already prohibited in maintained schools and for those pupils in independent schools whose fees are met from public funds. We will of course reflect carefully on the recent judgment by the European Court of Human Rights.

Grant-maintained Schools

20. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools in Essex have now opted out of local authority control; and if he will make a statement on Government policies to encourage further schools to seek grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: Thirty-three schools in Essex are today operating as self-governing grant-maintained schools. From Thursday that number will be 53, with three more approved for a later start. These figures, and the 34 further Essex schools with applications in the pipeline, demonstrate the appeal of self-government to parents. Provisions in the Education Bill will ease the path to GM status.

28. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have acquired grant-maintained status to date.

Mr. Forth: Four hundred and ninety one schools in England will be operating as self-governing grant-maintained schools on 1 April and a further 15 are approved for a later start.

Politics and Government

21. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the current proportion of pupils taking GCSEs in politics, government and related subjects.

Mr. Boswell: In the summer of 1992, some 5 per cent. of pupils who reached the age of 16 during the academic year attempted GCSEs in politics and related subjects in the social sciences. The flexibility within the national curriculum at key stage 4 will enable schools to continue to offer courses in such subjects.

School Buildings

22. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what expenditure on the maintenance of school buildings was incurred in each of the last three years for which records are available.

Mr. Forth: For the three years to 1990-91 revenue expenditure by English local education authorities on

school repairs, building and grounds maintenance was £553 million, £621 million and £657 million respectively. In addition authorities spent £565 million, £688 million and £648 million on school capital work, some of which will have contributed to the maintenance of buildings involved.

Class Sizes

23. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent guidance he has given to education authorities about class sizes in rural schools.

Mr. Forth: Our policy is to provide greater autonomy for schools so that they can make their own decisions on the deployment of resources. It would run counter to that policy to seek to impose a view on what class sizes would be most appropriate for rural schools.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will issue advice to schools on best practice in relation to class size in primary and secondary schools.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will issue guidance on the size of classes in schools.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 9 March (*Official Report*, column *522*).

Youth Service

24. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy on the appropriate level of youth service provision.

Mr. Boswell: The youth service is committed to the principle that the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum should be determined locally, and not nationally. The appropriate level of provision to deliver local youth service objectives is primarily a matter for individual local education authorities in accordance with their duty under sections 41 and 53 of the Education Act 1944.

Japanese

25. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make a statement on the teaching of Japanese in schools.

Mr. Boswell: The national curriculum requires all secondary school pupils to study at least one of 19 eligible foreign languages up to the age of 16. Japanese is one of these. It is for schools to decide whether to offer Japanese in the light of demand and of the resources available to them.

School Activities (Charges)

26. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about charges made to pupils in secondary schools for educational activities.

Mr. Forth: The Education Reform Act 1988 provides that, with the exception of fees for individual music tuition, no charges may be made for activities taking place during the school day. In no circumstances may schools charge for activities which are required for a prescribed public examination or are part of the national curriculum.

School Governors

27. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education now many school governors have been sacked by education authorities in the last six years; and if he will list the authorities concerned.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally by the Department.

Universities (Industrial and Commercial Development)

29. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will next meet the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the contribution universities can make to successful industrial and commercial development.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend currently has no plans to meet the Director General of the CBI. However, Ministers are encouraged to note from their day to day contacts with representatives of industry and the universities that they are very conscious of the need to promote links for their mutual benefit.

Nursery Education

30. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what studies he has commissioned as to the value of nursery education; and what initiatives he proposes.

Mr. Forth: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 2 March, *Official Report*, col. *123*.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assistance he can give to schools who have children with special needs.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities maintained schools are resourced for the vast majority of such children through the general funding allocated to them by the local education authority. In the case of grant-maintained schools, such provision is made through annual maintenance grant. For the smaller number of pupils who have statements of special educational needs (SEN), responsibility for arranging any necessary additional provision lies with the LEA. The Education Bill now before Parliament ensures that LEAs will continue to be able to offer SEN support services to all LEA and grant-maintained schools for all of their pupils with special needs.

The Department provides for capital work for special needs pupils in county, controlled and maintained special schools through annual capital guidelines (ACGs). Some £5·5 million of ACGs were distributed for 1993-94, with a further £3·6 million of resources earmarked for issue as supplementary credit approvals, pending decisions on related statutory proposals. A further sum will be available to non-maintained special schools in 1993-94 through a separate capital grant programme.

Mr. Jim Cunningham To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children have special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992 there were nearly 165,000 children for whom statements of special educational needs were being maintained by local education authorities in England.

Single-sex Schools

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many boys and how many girls respectively, receive single-sex education in state schools in England.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992, 148,000 boys attended maintained primary and secondary boys' schools and 180,000 girls attended maintained primary or secondary girls' schools in England. Some single-sex schools accept a few pupils of the opposite sex. In January 1992 there were about 1,000 such pupils.

Standard Assessment Tests

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to monitor standard assessment tests in relation to teacher contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he looks to teachers to carry out their contractual commitments to assess, record and report on the development, progress and attainment of pupils. He will be keeping the position under review.

Racial Incidents

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance his Department gives to local authorities and to grant-maintained schools regarding adopting guidelines in respect of racial incidents in and around schools.

Mr. Forth: Reports of the Inter-departmental Racial Attacks Group in 1989 and 1991 recommended that local education authorities and schools which had not already adopted policy statements on race relations and developed guidelines for responding to racial incidents should reconsider their positions. They also recommended that guidelines should reflect local consultation and policy statements should be widely distributed. Copies of both the group's reports—"The response to racial attacks and harassment: guidance for the statutory agencies" and "The response to racial attacks: sustaining the momentum"—are in the Library.

Primary Education

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give an estimate figure for the proportion of primary schools in *(a)* Cornwall and *(b)* England under the separate classification of local education authority and grant-maintained schools, which cannot deliver the requirements of the national curriculum because of a lack of appropriate buildings, equipment or facilities for physical education.

Mr. Forth: No such figures are available.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what monitoring has been carried out on progress on improving primary education since the publication of the National Curriculum Council's and Office for Standards in Education's report in January.

Mr. Forth: The National Curriculum Council and Ofsted continue to monitor the progress of the national curriculum with particular regard to primary education in the light of their recent reports. Ofsted will provide my right hon. Friend with a further report in the new year.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision he will make in respect of grants from the European regional development fund in 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: The Minister for Industry's written answer of 30 June 1992 (*Official Report*, columns *525-26*) announced details of the new arrangements for providing public expenditure cover for forecast ERDF receipts. I will make provision available during the year to offset wholly payments in respect of grants from the European regional development fund to be made in 1993-94 towards approved capital expenditure projects based at grant-aided educational institutions, and recurrent expenditure projects of an educational nature. This provision is currently estimated to be a maximum of £13 million.

School Attendance

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will seek advice on the legal status of a swipe card as a means of recording school attendance with regard to its possible use as an alibi by a juvenile criminal and the legitimacy of shifting the onus of registration from teachers to pupils.

Mr. Forth: We look to individual schools to ensure that, where electronic aids to pupil registration are employed, adequate safeguards are instituted to maintain the integrity of the systems. Such safeguards might include teacher supervision at swiping points and random checks of cards held by pupils. The Department will be working with the National Council for Educational Technology to evaluate the potential of information technology as a means of monitoring pupil attendance. The scope for abuse will, of course, be one of the issues that we shall be examining.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Eggar: Recruits to the senior grades in the Department (as to any grade in the civil service) are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community, including the extension of links with institutions of higher education, equal opportunities training for those involved in selection and the use of validated selection procedures.

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic

origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Voluntary surveys of ethnic origin were last conducted in 1988 (DTI) and 1990 (Department of Energy). The resulting database has been continuously updated with information on new staff and leavers and special exercises have been conducted to improve the positive response rate; 90 per cent. of staff currently employed by the Department have declared their ethnic origin.

Gender information is automatically held on the Department's personnel database and specific surveys to establish the number of women employed are not necessary.

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: The figures for the Department, including its Executive Agencies, as at 1 January 1993 are:

	(a) Women		*(b)*[1] Ethnic Minorities		*(c)*[1] Registered Disabled	
Grade level	*Number*	*Percentage staff*	*Number respondents*	*Percentage staff*	*Number*	*Percentage staff*
Grade 1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grade 3	6	11·0	—	—	—	—
Grade 4	2	12·5	—	—	—	—
Grade 5	39	14·0	2	0·7	—	—
Grade 6	26	11·0	7	3·0	—	—
Grade 7	176	13·0	26	1·9	3	0·2
All staff excluding industrials and casuals	5,715	44·0	1,228	9·5	121	0·9

[1] *(b)* Ethnic minority figures are based on 90 per cent. positive response rate to ethnic origin survey.
(c) The Department also employs a number of disabled staff who are not registered.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that the United Kingdom fulfils its obligations under the chemical weapons convention with regard to chemicals that fall within the scope of the treaty but are not routinely monitored by the Organsiation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Mr. Needham: The scope of the monitoring regime provided for in the chemical weapons convention is very broad. Known chemical weapons agents and their precursors, and toxic chemicals of particular concern and their precursors, are listed in the convention and will be monitored routinely. In addition, all plant sites producing by synthesis more than 200 tonnes of discrete organic chemicals per year will be subject to on-site verification four years after the convention enters into force, unless the conference of states parties decides otherwise.

It is intended to introduce legislation when parliamentary time permits to prohibit the production of chemicals for purposes prohibited by the convention.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many chemicals and families of chemicals will be subject to monitoring for routine verification by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons under the terms of the chemical weapons convention;

(2) how many chemicals and families of chemicals fall within the overall scope of the chemical weapons convention through its definition of chemical weapons.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The chemical weapons convention lists 43 chemicals or families of chemicals which will be subject to monitoring for routine verification by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In addition, all plant sites (except those producing exclusively explosives or hydrocarbons) producing more than 200 tonnes per year of unscheduled discrete organic chemicals, or more than 30 tonnes of such chemicals containing phosphorous, sulphur or fluorine, will be required to make an annual declaration and, in the case of plants producing more than 200 tonnes per year, may be subject to on-site verification.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is his Department's policy that article VII of the chemical weapons convention requires the United Kingdom national authority to conduct any verification to ensure United Kingdom compliance with the chemical weapons convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* Under the chemical weapons convention, the role of conducting verification to ensure compliance is assigned to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time permits to provide the necessary powers to ensure that the United Kingdom fulfils its obligations under the convention.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is his estimate of the volume of carbon dioxide released to the atmosphere by *(a)* the construction of Britain's Magnox AGR and PWR reactors and *(b)* the operation of Britain's nuclear reactors;

(2) what is his estimate of the carbon dioxide released to the atmosphere in the manufacture, quarrying and engineering of all building materials used in the building of Sizewell B PWR.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answers 29 March 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

It is very difficult to estimate the volumes of carbon dioxide released in the construction and operation of nuclear power plant, although the available estimates suggest that life cycle emissions are unlikely to exceed one twentieth of those from an equivalent coal fired plant; and

only about ten percent of this is likely to be incurred during the construction phase of a PWR station. Estimates specific to the construction of Sizewell B are not available.

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of trade between Great Britain and the United Arab Emirates during 1992.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* Information on United Kingdom visible trade is published in the Business Monitor MA20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the value of arms sales to the United Arab Emirates for each of the last two years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries.

Wood Trade

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will show, in cash terms, the level of import and export of *(a)* hard wood and *(b)* soft wood into and out of Britain in each year since 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The information is given in the table.

£ million

	(a) Trade in hard wood[1]		*(b) Trade in soft wood*[2]	
	Exports	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*
1988	11·7	292·3	13·3	1,054·3
1989	14·5	321·1	12·1	1,092·6
1990	16·3	298·5	8·8	1,096·5
1991	16·1	237·5	9·3	794·0
1992	17·8	237·0	10·0	774·9

[1] Hard wood is defined as headings 246.15, 247.5, 248.1, 248.4 and 248.5 of the Standard International Trade Classification (revision 3).

[2] Soft wood is defined as headings 246.11, 247.3, 247.4, 248.2 and 248.3 of the Standard International Trade Classification (revision 3).

Source: Business Monitor MA20.
Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Trade Balance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the balance of trade in *(a)* cars, *(b)* electronic goods, *(c)* IT equipment, *(d)* telecommunications and *(e)* white goods in 1979 and 1992.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The available information is given in the table.

United Kingdom crude balances[1] *(£ million)*

	1979	*1992*
Cars (a)	−1,764	−2,360
Information technology and electronics (b)	−435	−2,697
Of which:		
Office machinery and computers	−238	−1,564
Telegraph and telephone equipment	50	−187
Radio and electronic capital goods	119	241
Domestic electrical appliances (b)	−125	−482

Note:
[1] Crude balance equals exports (fob) minus imports (cif).

Sources:
(a) Business Monitor MA20—Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.
(b) Business Monitor MQ10—Overseas Trade analysed in terms of industries.

TRANSPORT

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he first announced the Government's commitment to the Jubilee line extension into docklands; and when he now expects the final agreement to be signed.

Mr. Norris: 16 November 1989; negotiations on the private sector contribution continue, and it would not be sensible for me to speculate about when they might finish.

British Rail (Appointments)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many potential candidates were considered for designation to become each of *(a)* the rail regulator, *(b)* the director of passenger rail franchising and *(c)* chairman of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: A number of candidates were considered for each of the posts.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the exchanges of correspondence which took place between himself and those he has designated to become *(a)* the rail regulator, *(b)* the director of passenger rail franchising and *(c)* the chairman of Railtrack, referring to the roles to which they are nominated.

Mr. Freeman: No. The Government have already made clear publicly the roles which the regulator, the franchising director, and Railtrack will have after the Railways Bill is enacted.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what costs were incurred in the advertisement and selection of those designated to become *(a)* the rail regulator, *(b)* the director of passenger rail franchising and *(c)* the chairman of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Transport paid to Norman Broadbent International, who assisted in the recruitment, £132,098, including value added tax. This payment covered fees, advertisements, and general expenses. Work done by officials in the course of their duties in relation to the appointments cannot accurately be costed.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether present or former employees of the British Railways Board were specifically excluded from consideration for designation to become each of *(a)* the rail regulator, *(b)* the director of passenger rail franchising and *(c)* the chairman of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of Railtrack's senior appointments come from *(a)* BR, *(b)* his Department, and *(c)* elsewhere; and how pay levels for people in *(a)* and *(b)* have altered.

Mr. Freeman: On 24 March, BR announced the appointments of 11 senior members-designate of Railtrack. Of these, ten came from within BR and the other was on secondment from the Department of Transport. Selection and appointment of staff of the "shadow" Railtrack are generally matters for the BR board. There are two exceptions: first, Mr. Robert Horton, whose appointment as Railtrack's chairman-designate was made by the Secretary of State, and who will continue to be a member of the BR board until Railtrack is established as a separate Government-owned company next year. Secondly, Mr. David Moss, Railtrack's commercial director-designate, who is a grade 3 official seconded to the BR board from the Department of Transport. In neither case did the salary alter with the appointment to shadow Railtrack.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria and procedures were used in identifying and selecting those designated to become *(a)* the rail regulator, *(b)* the director of passenger rail franchising and *(c)* chairman of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend appointed the candidates who in his judgment were the best fitted to carry out these roles. The Department engaged Norman Broadbent International to assist in the identification of suitable candidates.

British Rail (Objectives)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whhether he will set new objectives for British Rail to apply from 1 April.

Mr. MacGregor: Following is the text of a letter which I have today sent to the Chairman of British Rail, setting new objectives to apply from 1 April 1993:

"The Government sets objectives for BR which supplement the statutory and financial duties of the Board. The current objectives, which applied for a 3-year period, expire on 31 March 1993. We are now moving into a period of major change for BR, in preparation for privatisation. I am therefore writing to set out one year interim objectives for the operation of the present railway business, appropriate to this period of transition. These objectives will apply from 1 April 1993. The aim is to maintain a safe, efficient railway supplying high standards of service to its customers.

I shall also be setting the Board some specific privatisation objectives updating those set in July 1992. These will be set out in a separate letter.

Safety

The Board has a statutory duty to have regard to safety of operation. I welcome the considerable progress on safety improvements which has been made over the last 3 years. Maintaining and further improving standards of safety on the railways will continue to be an objective of major importance for the Board. This should be accompanied by continuing development of increasingly effective means of appraisal of safety investment. The BR Safety Plans produced in 1991 and 1992 have proved valuable; a further annual Safety plan should be submitted during 1993.

Quality of Service

Quality of Service remains a very high priority for BR, as reflected in your Passenger's Charter. I do not propose, for this transitional period, to make significant changes to the previously agreed quality of service objectives, as developed by the Passenger's Charter. For the future, the Franchising Director will wish to review with BR the current means of measuring quality of service, and consider whether any alternative measures should be developed which better reflect customer requirements and priorities.

BR's objectives for 1993-94 are therefore:

(i) *Reliability and punctuality*

Seek to achieve the agreed Passenger's Charter targets for 1993; these apply performance indicators for both reliability and punctuality on each of the service groups within Network SouthEast, InterCity and Regional Railways.

(ii) *Train enquiry bureaux/ticket offices/carriage cleaning*

Maintain the current agreed objectives as follows:

Train Enquiry Bureaux

95 per cent. of calls to be answered within 30 seconds.

Ticket Offices

Maximum queuing time of 3 minutes off-peak and 5 minutes peak.

Carriage Cleaning	*InterCity* *Per cent.*	*NSE* *Per cent.*	*Regional* *Per cent.*
Interior daily clean	100	100	100
Exterior wash	[1]95	[1]100	[2]100

[1] Daily.

[2]Every two days.

(iii) *Customer Satisfaction*

Measures of customer satisfaction can be more valuable and relevant for businesses in assessing the service they provide than the measures at (ii) above and (iv) below. I welcome the fact that the passenger businesses regularly carry out customer surveys and I would expect British Rail to place increasing emphasis on such measures of satisfaction. The Passenger's Charter commits British Rail to publishing the results of customer surveys and I look forward to such publication during 1993-94. In particular, I look to British Rail to measure and publish customers' satisfaction with the provision of customer information.

(iv) *Overcrowding*

For Network SouthEast and Regional Railways urban and shorter rural routes you should continue to work towards the objective that the ratio of passengers to seats on individual trains should not be more than 135 per cent. on sliding-door trains and 110 per cent. on slam-door trains, with no standing for longer than 20 minutes except by choice. I recognise however that the appropriateness of this measure has been questioned and am sure that the Franchising Director will wish to consider alternatives which might reflect more fully the conditions experienced by passengers and the value they place on avoiding overcrowding.

Productivity and cost control

Improving productivity and making the most efficient use of resources continues to be of major importance across the whole of the railway business. The Board should continue to monitor unit cost trends and publish them in its annual report. I welcome the steps the Board is taking to reduce working expenses. This is particularly necessary bearing in mind the recent reductions in the Board's revenues, notably income from passengers. I look to the Board to reduce underlying working expenses for the passenger businesses by at least 5 per cent. in real terms compared to 1992-93.

Passenger Businesses—Operating Profit/Loss

In addition to the cost reductions set out above, I am sure that Network SouthEast, InterCity and Regional Railways will be exploring all possible means of increasing passenger numbers and income during 1993-94, thus improving their operating profits/losses.

I look to the businesses to achieve at least the following targets for total profit/(loss) on ordinary activities, before PSO grant:

	£ million
Network SouthEast	(128)
InterCity	12
Regional	(411)

Freight Businesses

I will be setting specific restructuring objectives for freight in the light of our joint consideration of the results of the study carried out by Mercer.

In addition, during this transitional period I expect both businesses to make every effort to improve their operating result. This means that management should persist in taking necessary action in respect of loss making services and continue to reduce costs. It will also enable the Board to continue to retain traffic which can at least cover its avoidable costs.

In focussing on operating result, it will be important for the businesses not to lose sight of the need to earn a commercial return on new investment. The basis for decisions on new investment will therefore continue to be an 8 per cent. rate of return.

Red Star and Rail Express Systems

Red Star should be privatised during 1993, in accordance with agreed objectives.

Rail Express Services should be prepared for privatisation as soon as possible.

Channel Tunnel Services

Preparation of all the necessary infrastructure should be completed in time for the opening of the Channel Tunnel. Freight services should start operating from the opening of the Tunnel and scheduled commercial intercapitals services as soon as practicable in 1994. BR should make maximum use of the commercial opportunities, for freight and passenger services, resulting from the opening of the Channel Tunnel, and start to prepare Channel Tunnel services for privatisation.

Transmark

Transmark should be privatised during 1993, in line with agreed objectives.

Public Accountability

Progress in achieving these objectives should be published in BR's Annual Report and Accounts for 1993-94."

EC Cohesion Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to and received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland on co-ordination of that country's future applications for assistance from the European Community cohesion fund on transport infrastructure projects affecting ports on the east coast of Ireland with potential United Kingdom transport infrastructure provision at appropriate landfalls on the west coast of Great Britain and onward from such ports to major European markets.

Mr. Norris: None.

Paddington-Heathrow Rail Line

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his Budget statement on public-private infrastructure investment, when he expects the design team will be set up for the electrification of the Paddington-Heathrow railway line.

Mr. Freeman: Preliminary design studies have already been carried out sufficient for cost estimates to be completed. I understand that it is intended to form a design team by September 1993 to finalise details.

Road Safety Departments

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many local authority road safety departments have been closed in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list local authorities that have a road safety department and those that have closed such departments in the last year.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As far as the Department is aware, all local authorities employ staff engaged in road safety, but no central record is kept of whether these are located in a separate road safety department.

Cycle Helmets

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many local authorities have run reduced price schemes for cycle helmets in each year since 1980.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Neither the Department nor local authorities keep a central record of these. We do, however, have information that, by the end of 1990, there were 76 local authorities and other organisations running low-cost cycle helmet schemes.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiative his Department is undertaking to promote the wearing of cycle helmets.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am pleased to announce that on March 25 I launched a new television campaign to promote the wearing of cycle helmets, particularly by children.

Car Phones

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring in regulations to make it an offence to use a hand-held car phone while driving a moving vehicle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is an offence for a driver to fail to control a vehicle or drive in a dangerous or careless manner. These powers are sufficient.

In addition, the highway code says:

"you must exercise proper control of your vehicle at all times. Do not use a hand held telephone or microphone while you are driving. Find a safe place to stop first".

Roads Expenditure

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of cars on the roads; and how much was spent on roads, per car, by *(a)* national and *(b)* local Government in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In December 1991, there were 17·7 million vehicles of body type cars which were licensed and for which the address of the registered keeper was in England.

In 1991-92, the Department of Transport spent £1,926 million on national roads and local authorities spent £2,578 million on local roads.

It would not be appropriate to present expenditure figures on a per car basis as spending also reflects the provision made for heavy and light goods vehicles, buses and coaches, other classes of vehicles, and pedestrians.

Roads, Croydon

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent on road improvements in the London borough of Croydon in the last five years.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is highway authority for the A23 trunk road in Croydon: other roads in the areaa are the responsibility of the London Borough. Expenditure on improvement works, excluding fees, on the A23 in the borough in each financial year was as follows:

	£
1988-89	814,055
1989-90	2,119,069
1990-91	2,199,430
1991-92	203,094
1992-93	[1]156,240

[1]provisional

Expenditure in the first three years, in particular, is not typical because it includes the cost of a major national trunk road improvement.

Newbury Bypass

Mr. David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be in a position to announce the go-ahead for the Newbury bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The decision following the 1992 public inquiry into supplementary proposals for the A34 Newbury bypass and the compulsory purchase of the land needed for the scheme was issued on 25 March. In accordance with the inspector's recommendations my right hon. Frends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment are minded to make the remaining statutory orders for the scheme, subject to consultations on a number of modifications to the published proposals. Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of these consultations and availability of funds, I hope that work will start on this much-needed bypass early next year.

Overbridge (Clints Brow)

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the full cost of the overbridge to accommodate cattle at Clints brow, Egremont, Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The full cost of the Longhorn farm overbridge at Clints brow is currently estimated at £236,000.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the date of the first approach to his Department to request an overbridge at Clints brow, Egremont, Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The Department was first made aware of the road safety implications of dairy cattle crossing the trunk road at Clints brow in November 1991.

Bypass (Egremont)

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects the full opening of the A595 bypass at Egremont, Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Completion of the bypass works is expected to be 7 May 1993. Sections of the bypass are already open to traffic.

West Cumbria

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to visit west Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The Secretary of State has no current plans to visit West Cumbria.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for road improvements in west Cumbria.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The Department's plans for road improvements in West Cumbria are contained in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" and set out in the programme "Trunk Roads England, into the 1990s".

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish estimates for 1993-94 showing the number of self-employed men and women who pay *(a)* class four national insurance contributions, *(b)* class two contributions, *(c)* class three contributions, *(d)* no national insurance contributions, *(e)* the number who have profits above the upper profits limit for class four contributions and *(f)* the total number of self-employed.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table:

million

	Men	*Women*
(a)	1·8	0·2
(b)	2·2	0·3
(c)	Reliable estimates are not available	
(d)	nil	0·5
(e)	The total number with profits above the upper profits limit is estimated to be 0·5 million, of which some 5 per cent. are women	
(f)	2·25	0·75

[1] Figures in the table (a-e) have been rounded to nearest 0·1 million.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94 of the numbers of male and female employees who are on earnings below the national insurance lower earnings limit.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that in both 1992-93 and 1993-94 there will be some 0·75 million male employees and 2·25 million females employees who earn less than the lower earnings limit.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenues in 1993-94 of *(a)* raising the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions to the level of the personal tax allowance and *(b)* raising the upper earnings limit to £27,145.

Miss Widdecombe: The effect on the amount of contributions raised in respect of 1993-94 would be:
(a) −£0·4 billion
(b) +£0·6 billion

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount raised from *(a)* employers' and *(b)* employees' national insurance contributions in 1978-79; what is his estimate of the figure for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

National insurance contributions raised (£ billion)

Year[3]	*Employees*	*Employers*
1978-79	3·7	[1]5·9
[2]1993-94	14·6	23·6

[1]Total excludes the national insurance surcharge.
[2]*Source:* Government Actuary's Report on the Social Security Bill 1992 (Cm. 2097).
[3]Figures include the National Health Service allocation.

Refugees

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many refugees have applied for a community care grant after arriving in the United Kingdom; and how many have been refused in each of the last two years.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested has already been placed in the Library. No decisions have yet been made about which services will be market tested in future years.

Pensions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to publish gender-disaggregated statistics on private and occupational pension provision.

Miss Widdecombe: Where available, information relating to occupational and personal pensions is provided on a gender-disaggregated basis on request. We have no plans to alter that arrangement.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by Watson Europe on pensions in Britain and Europe.

Miss Widdecombe *[pursuant to her reply, 29 March 1993]:* I am arranging for a copy of the research data provided by Watson Europe to be placed in the Library today. The net benefit totals given for each of the family models covered by this study are expressed in sterling equivalents. A summary table showing figures which reflect purchasing power parity, derived from OECD data, is included. None of the figures includes the value of health benefits.

Income Support (Unemployed People)

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the benefit of an unemployed person who is in receipt of income support is retained or is suspended where a doubt arises about their availability for work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: While a doubt about an unemployed person's availability for work is being considered, income support may be paid at a reduced rate if the adjudication officer is satisfied that the claimant or a member of his family would otherwise suffer hardship.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) of 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *601-2*, if he will instruct the chief executives of agencies within his responsibility to discontinue the practice of delaying letters to hon. Members in response to parliamentary questions until the day after copies have been sent to Ministers.

Miss Widdecombe: Chief executives of the Department's next steps agencies are expected to abide by the guidance to all Departments when the present publication arrangements were introduced in October 1992; that hon. Members should receive a letter in reply within twenty four hours of him or her receiving the responsible Minister's own reply. I understand that so far they have done so in almost every case.

Postage Costs

Mr. Cann: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what his Department and its agencies paid in postage in the last year for which records are available.

Mr. Burt: The cost to the Department and its executive agencies in 1991-92, the latest year for which information is available, was about £64 million.

Pension Law Review Committee

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress is being made by the pension law review committee.

Mr. Lilley: The review has attracted a great deal of interest and the committee is currently analysing evidence from some 1,700 written submissions, seven days of oral hearings, during which a number of organisations and individuals gave evidence to support their submissions, and three public meetings.

Under the weight and detail of all this evidence, Professor Goode has asked for a short extension to his reporting timetable. I am concerned to have this report as

quickly as possible, but given the complexity of the task, the importance of the outcome and the need for a very careful analysis of the issues, I have agreed to extend the deadline for the report to 30 September 1993.

Copies of Professor Goode's letter, requesting the extension, and my reply have been placed in the Library.

NHS Transport, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *497*, whether the contract for providing a bus service for staff travelling between Quarry House, Leeds, and Leeds city station was *(a)* advertised, *(b)* subject to competitive tendering and *(c)* awarded on the basis of the lowest tender; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The contract for the bus service between Quarry House, Leeds and Leeds city British Rail station was not advertised. In view of the need at the time to provide a bus service at short notice and the fact that limited hours of service were involved, five local omnibus operators were contacted and invited to tender for the contract. The tenders were carefully considered in accordance with departmental guidelines and the contract awarded to the company offering best value for money.

Reciprocal Pension Agreements

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Her Majesty's Government last took steps to negotiate a reciprocal pension agreement with a foreign country; what criteria have been used in selecting the countries in respect of which agreements have thus far been concluded; and if he will now take steps to conclude agreements with all those countries with which no agreement exists, to which significant numbers of United Kingdom pensioners have retired.

Miss Widdecombe: The United Kingdom most recently concluded a social security agreement with Barbados which came into force in April 1992. It fulfils a commitment given to the Government of Barbados in 1974.

In order to enter into an agreement with the United Kingdom the other country's social security scheme had to be sufficiently similar to provide for reciprocity. Increasingly, there had to be sufficient movement of workers between the two countries to justify the outlay of resources to negotiate, operate and maintain the agreement. Above all, any additional costs had to be affordable.

The majority of United Kingdom pensioners overseas live in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. The United Kingdom already has social security agreements with Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which, in general, allow residence or insurance in one country to be used by the country where the pensioner normally resides to satisfy its qualifying conditions for a pension. They do not allow for United Kingdom pension increases to be paid in those countries. There is no agreement with South Africa. We have no plans to revise the agreements with Australia, Canada and New Zealand, or to negotiate an agreement with South Africa.

Social Fund

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the balance outstanding for *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans from the social fund at the most recent available date in the district covering the Stoke on Trent, North parliamentary constituency; if he will give a breakdown by reason of the number of grant and loan applications refused since 1 April 1992 for that district; how many review applications were received by that district; and how many of them resulted in a changed decision.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Ms Joan Walley, dated 29 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what was the balance outstanding for *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans from the Social Fund at the most recent available date in the District covering the Stoke on Trent North parliamentary constituency; if he will give a breakdown by reason of the number of grant and loan applications refused since 1st April 1992 for that district; how many review applications were received by that district; and how many of them resulted in a changed decision.

The following details are provided for the Benefits Agency's North Staffordshire District which deals with your constituency.

The outstanding balance of the District Social Fund allocation at 28 February 1993, the latest date for which figures are available, was £66,912 for grants and £113,528 for loans.

Details of the numbers of grant and loan applications refused and of reasons for refusal are given at Appendix A.

During the period 1 April 1992 to 28 February 1993, 2,658 review applications were received by North Staffordshire District. Of these, 852 resulted in a changed decision.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Appendix A

Details of Grant and Loan Refusals for North Staffordshire District 1 April 1992—28 February 1993 (Latest available data)

Reason for Refusal	*Grants*	*Loans*
Not in receipt of Income Support (IS)	465	377
In receipt of IS for less than 26 weeks	—	1,326
Direction 4 not satisfied	4,256	—
Applicant excluded by Direction	9	11
No serious risk to health or safety	—	132
Requested amount below minimum allowable	28	114
Previous decision for same item(s) within 26 weeks	249	292
Item excluded by Direction	167	203
Alternative item available	4	12
Help available from another source	25	25
Grant awarded on loan request	—	271
Savings over £500 meet cost	14	5
Savings over £1,000 meet cost (customer or partner over 60)	9	3
Enough money available to meet crisis	—	5
Total debt exceeds £1,000	—	17
Inability to repay	—	229
Insufficient priority	969	1,575
Other reasons	25	75

Note: Secretary of State's Directions are listed in the Social Fund Guide, a copy of which is in the Library.

DEFENCE

RAF (Radios)

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a decision on the contract for the supply of management radios for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that a contract to supply and maintain 6,000 management radios for the Royal Air Force has today been awarded to Phillips Communications Systems Ltd in Cambridge. Contractual details are commercially confidential but the approximate value of the contract is £13 million. The contract was won by Phillips in competition. The radios will be used for secure local communications on RAF bases.

Iraq

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information he has relating to the prosecution of Iraqi personnel for alleged breaches of international conventions or treaties relating to the conduct of hostilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. The United Nations continues to gather evidence and the United Kingdom is contributing in full to this process. No decisions have been taken on the way forward.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what responsibilities his Department had for the provision of information about Iraqi military capabilities and intentions prior to 2 August 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Within my Department, the defence intelligence staff are responsible for the provision of assessments for the Government on defence policies, intentions and capabilities of any potential enemies.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether compensation payments have now been made to those Ministry of Defence personnel who were held captive by the Iraqi Government after the invasion of Kuwait; and if he will make a statement:

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Compensation payments have been made to those personnel who were forced to abandon personal effects in Kuwait. Personnel held captive by the Iraqi Government after the invasion are submitting claims via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the United Nations Compensation Commission in accordance with UN resolution 687 and the rules developed by the governing council of the UNCC.

Convention Breaches

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the prosecution of British service personnel for possible breaches of international conventions or treaties relating to the conduct of hostilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British service personnel are subject to both domestic and international law at all times. Any allegation that members of our armed forces had contravened the laws of armed conflict would be investigated, and if necessary the evidence would be referred to the appropriate authority for consideration of proceedings against the individuals concerned.

Gulf Trust

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current amount of money in the Gulf Trust; how much money has been paid out by the Gulf Trust in the last 18 months; and how many people have been provided with assistance by the Gulf Trust.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current amount of money in the Gulf Trust, including accrued interest, is £2,854,570. The amount of money paid out by the Gulf Trust in the last 18 months to reimburse the benevolent funds for payments in respect of Gulf related cases is £193,661. Some payments made over the period have yet to be reimbursed from the Gulf Trust. 159 individuals have so far been provided with assistance from the trust together with four charitable bodies and three charitable funds.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning the criteria for payments to be made by the Gulf Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The criteria for payments made by the Gulf Trust are set out in the trust deed. The objectives of the trust are the relief of financial need of the beneficiaries and to relieve sickness, distress or any other physical or mental disability of the beneficiaries insofar as they have arisen or may arise by virtue of the military and other operations relating to or in connection with the Gulf conflict. Provision may also be made for such other charitable purposes for the benefit of the beneficiaries as the united services trustee as trustee of the fund in its absolute discretion, thinks fit.

To be a beneficiary a person must be a member of Her Majesty's armed forces involved in military and other operations relating to or in connection with the Gulf conflict; the civilian personnel attached to or accompanying such members of the armed forces; and their respective dependants. Individual applications for assistance from the Gulf Trust are handled by the service benevolent funds working within the terms of the Gulf trust deed, their own trust deeds and charity law and they apply their normal, established policies in making payments.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the deployment of armed forces to *(a)* Kosovo and *(b)* the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent consideration he has given to the deployment of British armed forces to *(a)* Kosovo and *(b)* the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No consideration has been given to the deployment of British forces into Serbia, of which Kosovo is a province. There is a CSCE civilian observer mission in Kosovo but the United Nations has made no proposals for a deployment there. In the case of

Macedonia, United Nations Security Council resolution 795 of 11 December 1992 authorised the deployment there of an infantry battalion and a number of United Nations military observers (UNMOs) and United Nations civil police to provide a monitoring presence on Macedonia's borders with Albania and the former Republic of Yugoslavia. The United Kingdom agreed to a United Nations request to redeploy one United Kingdom UNMO to Macedonia; and to redeploy temporarily nine personnel and three vehicles from the United Kingdom field ambulance unit in Croatia to assist with the provision of medical care for United Nations forces in Macedonia pending the arrival of the Nordic battalion with its own capability. In the event, however, the deployment of the United Kingdom field ambulance personnel was not required.

Belize

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent incursions there have been across the border from Guatemala to Belize which United Kingdom armed forces personnel have attempted to prevent; what discussions Her Majesty's Government held with the Governments of Guatemala and Belize on these incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been no such recent incidents.

Housing

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provisions he has made to publicise the Housing Corporation's do-it-yourself shared ownership scheme to service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The do-it-yourself shared ownership (DIYSO) scheme is widely publicised in the three services. The joint service housing advice office distribute a DIYSO information leaflet, on a monthly basis, to every service unit world-wide via the joint services married quarters sales office bulletins. The Army families advice bureau also circulates the leaflet to all housing commandants, families officers, Army welfare assistants and through resettlement channels. The three service magazines advertise the scheme and there are briefings and presentations to service personnel worldwide.

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what means he is taking to encourage the sale of surplus housing to service personnel at a 30 per cent. discount; and what plans he has for raising the discount to serving personnel to a maximum of 60 per cent.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All surplus married quarters which are suitable for individual sale are normally offered to service personnel through the services discount scheme in the first instance. There are no plans to raise the discount to 60 per cent.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Aitken: The number and value of contracts recorded as placed in the last three years with these firms, and with other businesses which are clearly linked to them, are detailed in the table. Data for 1989-90 and earlier years are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

	1992-93[1]	*1991-92*	*1990-91*
Arthur Andersen	nil	nil	2 contracts £370,000
Andersen Consulting	7 contracts £6,450,613	4 contracts £496,147	4 contracts £2,788,922
KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock	4 contracts £203,361	9 contracts £565,850	11 contracts £2,802,179
KPMG Management Consulting	1 contract[2]	nil	nil
Touche Ross & Co.	6 contracts £1,749,875	6 contracts £1,129,552	6 contracts £1,110,437
Touche Ross Management Consultants	9 contracts £1,172,351	13 contracts £802,305	nil
Ernst & Young	nil	1 contract[1]	3 contracts £297,890
Ernst & Young Management Consultants	4 contracts £335,300	5 contracts £559,653	6 contracts £1,234,624
Price Waterhouse	10 contracts £1,145,419	8 contracts £471,122	4 contracts £582,409

[1] All contracts recorded centrally up to end February, but may not include contracts placed in late February.
[2] As it is our practice to treat values of individual contracts as commercially confidential, I am not able to reveal the value of this contract.

It is not possible to identify the duration and nature of each and everyone of these contracts without disproportionate cost.

Homing Pigeons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what operational establishments of homing pigeons currently exist in Her Majesty's armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Brilliant Pebbles

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent communications he has had with the United States Department of Defense in regard to the Brilliant Pebbles space-based interceptor system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States continues to keep the United Kingdom advised of the progress on all elements of the strategic defence initiative programme. The new administration however has yet to give precise details of its proposed SDI architecture.

Theatre Defence Interceptor

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what orders or research contracts have been placed in the United Kingdom under the Pentagon's strategic defence initiative office for the responsive theatre defence interceptor.

Mr. Aitken: No United States-funded research contracts specifically related to candidate theatre defence interceptors have been awarded to my Department. It is not our practice to give details of individual contracts won directly by United Kingdom firms or universities, although we believe that there are none at present in this category.

Recruitment

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent in each of the last three years on manpower recruitment; and how much of this was accounted for by media advertising.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The information in respect of centrally controlled expenditure is as follows:

	Financial years		
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ million*
Recruitment	n/a	84·88	72·86
Media advertising	12·01	10·51	7·04

Details of recruitment expenditure other than media advertising, prior to April 1991, are not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Until 1 April 1991 recruitment of centrally funded civilian staff was carried out by the Civil Service Commission and details of expenditure for the Ministry of Defence are therefore unobtainable.

HEALTH

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by her Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Sackville: The information has been placed in the Library. Information is not readily available before the year 1991-92 nor for the duration of individual contracts.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the list of medical conditions which confer exemption from prescription charges to include cystic fibrosis.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 25 March at column 696.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to replace free prescriptions entirely with the pre-payment certificate scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Recruits to senior grades in the Department are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition with certain limited and legally permitted exceptions. Various steps have been taken throughout the civil service to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including equal opportunities training for those involved in selection and the use of validated selection procedures.

The Department supports these initiatives and monitors carefully the results of all recruitment exercises.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when her Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether she will make a statement;

(2) how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in her Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Sackville: The last survey of ethnic origin conducted in the Department was in December 1992. A further survey is planned later in this year. No special surveys are conducted to determine the number of women employed by the Department as this information is readily available.

The information requested on the number of women, ethnic minority staff and disabled people is shown in the table:

Grade	Total staff (numbers)	Women number	Per cent.	Ethnic minorities number	Per cent.	Disabled people number	Per cent.
1	2	0	—	0	—	0	—
2	5	0	—	0	—	0	—
3	26	6	23·1	0	—	0	—
4	28	7	25·0	0	—	2	7·1
5	193	63	32·6	11	5·7	1	0·5
6	142	49	34·5	4	2·8	0	—
7	557	172	30·8	22	3·9	3	0·5
All Grades (including 1·7)	5,112	2,819	55·1	651	12·7	68	1·3

Notes:
1. Number of staff, based on figures obtained from the Department's personnel computer system as at 24 March 1993.
2. The figures exclude special hospitals, youth treatment service, staff on loan, secondees in to the Department and casual staff of all grades.
3. The figures for disabled people are for Registered Disabled People only.
4. Numbers of ethnic minority staff relate to those responding to the ethnic origin questionnaire.

First Aid

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken in support of the St. John Ambulance Breath of Life campaign launch day; and if she will make a statement as to the importance of first aid education to the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: At the invitation of St. John Ambulance my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched the campaign on 23 March.

Basic resuscitation treatment in the first minute or two after an accident or heart attack can be vital in sustaining life until skilled professional help arrives. The more people who are willing to train in these skills the greater the benefit to the public.

Azapropazone

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the known side-effects of the drug azapropazone; and what steps are taken to draw the attention of patients for whom this drug is prescribed to these side-effects;

(2) whether she will direct that the known side-effects of the drug azapropazone are drawn to the personal attention of the patients for whom this drug is prescribed.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the side effects of azapropazone is given in the British National Formulary, which the Department issues free of charge to all prescribers, and in the data sheet for the product, which is produced by the manufacturer and authorised by the licensing authority. The side effects include photosensitive skin rashes, gastrointestinal bleeding and perforation of peptic ulcers. Blood disorders and kidney damage have been reported rarely. It is for doctors to use their clinical judgment in discussing with the patient the likely benefits and possible side effects associated with their treatment.

New legislation will make it mandatory to provide information to patients on the likely side effects of a medicine either by means of the label or package leaflet. This is intended to supplement the information given to the patient by their doctor.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on how the Medicines Control Agency's opening balance will be financed when it becomes a trading fund on 1 April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In order that the Medicines Control Agency can begin trading on 1 April 1993 two separate sums need be paid into the fund's opening balance via a Contingencies Fund advance:

i. £9 million to cover money paid in advance by the pharmaceutical industry up to 31 March 1993, primarily in respect of licence application fees;

ii. £5·1 million to cover the surplus of income over expenditure at 31 March 1993.

Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in the 1993-94 estimates for the Department of Health administration, miscellaneous health and personal social services, England vote (class XII, vote 3). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £14·1 million will be met by repayable advances from the Contingency Fund.

Obsessive Disorders

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines her Department has issued to health care professionals for dealing with people who suffer from obsessive and compulsive disorders.

Mr. Yeo: The care and management of people suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorders is a matter for the health professionals involved, taking into account the views of the sufferers and their families.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what counselling is available to people who suffer from phobias, obsessive and compulsive disorders and anxiety attacks.

Mr. Yeo: Counselling may be available through primary care services including counsellors attached to general practitioner practices. Voluntary organisations specialising in such disorders may also provide counselling. Hospital psychiatric departments offer a range of treatments for such disorders, on referral. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has published a patient fact sheet on anxiety and phobias, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding is available for self-help groups which support *(a)* sufferers of obsessive and compulsive disorders and *(b)* sufferers who are dependent on benzodiazepines.

Mr. Yeo: Local self-help groups are expected to undertake their own fund raising. Groups constituted as voluntary organisations may apply for funding from social

services departments, district health authorities or other local grant-giving agencies such as charitable trusts. In 1993-94 the Department of Health will be grant aiding several national voluntary bodies active in this field, including the National Association for Mental Health (MIND) and Phobia Action.

Ambulance Service

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what arrangements have been made for ambulance staff who have been transferred into trust employment to retain their rights of appeal against disciplinary action or dismissal, formerly involving regional health authorities;

(2) how many appeals relating to disciplinary action or dismissal of ambulance staff have been heard by trust boards in the last available year; and how many applications for hearing appeals have been rejected;

(3) how many appeals relating to disciplinary action or dismissal of ambulance staff have been upheld by trust boards and how many have been dismissed in the last available year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Staff who transfer to national health service trusts with their Whitley terms and conditions of service retain the right to disciplinary appeals procedures outlined in section 40 of the General Whitley Council handbook. Copies are available in the Library. Information on appeals is not available centrally.

Cardiomyoplasty

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study her Department has made of the use, including that at Manchester's Wythenshawe hospital, of cardiomyoplasty in the treatment of serious heart conditions where previously a heart transplant was seen as the only life-saving option; how many people in the United Kingdom who die prematurely of heart disease each year could be helped by cardiomyoplasty; what action she will be taking in regard to its use; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The place of cardiomyoplasty in the surgical management of cardiac disease is not yet established. It is not possible to estimate the number of people who might benefit. The development of this procedure is being monitored by the Department.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions she has reached from the cumulative data acquired during investigations into food poisoning outbreaks.

Mr. Sackville: The cumulative data acquired is not in itself sufficient to draw firm conclusions. These data provide valuable indicators which prompt further analytical and laboratory investigations.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce legislation to require local authorities to publish the results of food poisoning investigations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 15 March at column 6.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what performance standards apply to public sector agencies undertaking the investigation of food poisoning outbreaks; and if these standards are published;

(2) whether she will review the quality of food poisoning outbreak investigations by local authorities to ensure uniformity of standards of inquiry.

Mr. Sackville: There are no uniform performance standards which apply to public sector agencies. The Government have set up an informal working party to produce guidance to all investigating officers on the management of and reporting of foodborne illness.

The Department of Health and the Department of the Environment also issued joint guidance, in October 1991, to health authorities and local authorities reminding them of the collaborative arrangements that should have been made for communicable disease control. A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports of salmonella food poisoning her Department has received from local authorities either directly or via the public health laboratory for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: Reports of cases of salmonellosis are received via the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS).

The table shows total of laboratory reports of all salmonellas made to the public health laboratory service:

Salmonella in humans
England and Wales
Annual totals 1987 to 1992

Year	*All salmonellas*
1987	20,532
1988	27,478
1989	29,998
1990	30,112
1991	27,693
[1]1992	31,352

Source: PHLS/SVS Update on Salmonella Infection.

[1] 1992 data is not directly comparable with previous years because of the introduction from 1 January 1992 of a new Public Health Laboratory Service reporting system for human salmonellosis.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what private bodies are employed by her Department to undertake investigations into food poisoning outbreaks.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of prosecutions made in each EC country for breaches in each country's food hygiene legislation and the total fines realised in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: Member states are required to make an annual return to the Commission which includes the number of infringements of food hygiene legislation, but not specifically details of the number of prosecutions nor of the money collected from fines. The first returns were made in 1992 but have not yet been published by the Commission.

Racial Harassment

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department has given to local authority social service departments in respect of racial harassment; and what steps she has taken to ensure that staff are sufficiently trained to fulfil it.

Mr. Yeo: In 1989 the report of an inter-Departmental group was issued which offered guidance to statutory agencies on the response to racial attacks and harassment. Copies of the report were sent to all directors of social services departments. A progress report was issued in December 1991. Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Wessex Regional Health Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports were submitted to her Department by Department of Health auditors, by auditors appointed by the Department, by the district auditor or by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission, regarding Wessex regional health authority, in each year since 1984; and, in each case, what was the subject of the report, the date received, and whether it was a public or confidential report.

Mr. Sackville: Information on audit reports submitted to the Department of Health regarding Wessex regional health authority since 1984 is shown in the table. The date given for each is the date on which the report was signed and sent to the Department.

Date	*Title and subject*	*Report prepared by*
14 November 1984[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1984 —No issues raised	Department of Health statutory auditors
30 October 1985[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1985 —Sundry creditors —Computer installation: Programmer access to 'live' files —Wessex Kuwait collaboration project—Managerial and financial control —Performance of works consultants	Department of Health statutory auditors
26 September 1986[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1986 —Computer installation (reiteration of 1984-85 report) —Performance of works consultants (reiteration of 1984-85 report)	Department of Health statutory auditors
9 February 1987[1]	Interim report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1987 —The development and procurement of a regional information systems plan (RISP)	Department of Health statutory auditors
9 February 1987	Report In Confidence to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ending 31 March 1987 —The development and procurement of a regional information systems plan (RISP)	Department of Health statutory auditor
25 August 1987[1]	Interim report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1987 —Financial control over regional information systems plan (RISP) expenditure —The recruitment of staff and the use of contract staff in connection with RISP development and existing computing services —The engagement and control of management consultants —Purchase of computers	Department of Health statutory auditors
26 October 1987[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1987 —No other issues raised	Department of Health statutory auditor
29 October 1987	Report In Confidence to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1987 —Consultants' travelling expenses	Department of Health statutory auditor
November 1987	Report In Confidence to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1988 —Regional information systems plan (RISP)	Department of Health statutory auditor
2 November 1988[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1988 —Reiteration of interim audit report dated 25 August 1987	Department of Health statutory auditor

Date	*Title and subject*	*Report prepared by*
10 April 1989[1]	Interim report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1989 —Regional computer centre—Inadequate level of security caused by certain staff having access to 'live' files	Department of Health statutory auditor
12 September 1989[1]	Interim report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1989 —Control of capital expenditure—Inadequate control of capital projects	Department of Health statutory auditor
31 October 1989[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1989 —No other issues raised	Department of Health statutory auditor
28 August 1990[1]	Interim report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of the Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1990 —Regional information systems plan (RISP)—Contract and procurement procedures, project management and accounting —Regional computing services as supplied by CIPFA Financial Management (formerly Wessex Information Systems Ltd., WISL)—Contracting arrangements, management control and user requirements	Department of Health statutory auditor
31 October 1990[1]	Report to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1990 —No other issues raised	Department of Health statutory auditor
31 October 1990	Report In Confidence to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1990 —Capital programme and cash management	Department of Health statutory auditor
15 July 1992	Report In Confidence to the Secretary of State on the audit of the accounts of Wessex regional health authority for the year ended 31 March 1991 —A review of the regional information systems plan —A review of Wessex integrated systems contracts 1988-91	District auditor
15 July 1992[1]	Report In The Public Interest: Wessex regional health authority statutory report of the district auditor, Local Government Finance Act 1982, National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990	District auditor

[1] Those reports carried out by the statutory auditor (or district audit service) and submitted to Wessex regional health authority. All other reports were submitted to the Secretary of State "in confidence".

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health at what stage and for what reasons, her Department sought external legal advice about the possible publication of the Health Trac and Qa reports by West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: No external legal advice was sought by the Department.

Pit Closures

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the health implications of the Government's pit closure programme; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is published evidence of the health hazards of working in the mining industry, and of the consequences for employed people generally and their families of changes in employment status. Health authorities monitor, assess and where appropriate respond to the needs of their local populations.

Care Homes

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to monitor the effects of community care implementation on registered care homes affording generalist provision for single homeless people.

Mr. Yeo: We shall be monitoring the implementation of the new community care arrangements in a variety of ways. As part of this we will be studying how authorities meet the care needs of homeless people.

HIV-AIDS Grant

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *351*, if she will describe the process involved which caused the change from the previous answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *800*, with regard to HIV/AIDS grant to the London borough of Bromley; how many other local authorities benefited by the same process; and if she will list the comparable figures for each local authority for changes at the same point in the financial year since the introduction of HIV/AIDS grant support to local authorities.

Mr. Sackville: A sum of money was identified from this year's programmed spending which enabled the Department to meet Bromley's late bid. No other authorities received money in this way.

Five Communities Health Authority

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce the chairman and members of the Five Communities health authority that will commission planned health provision replacing the former Scunthorpe health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Mrs. Veronica Pettifer has been appointed as chairman of the new merged Grimsby and Scunthorpe health authority.

The appointment of the members of the new health authority is a matter for Yorkshire regional health authority.

Domestic Fuel

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the health implications of the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel and heating; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Vaccination and Immunisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and percentage of *(a)* general practices and *(b)* community medical officers in each family health services authority area in England who have reached the vaccination and immunisation higher and lower targets and booster targets as at the latest available date; and if she will make a statement on the combined impact of general practitioner and community medical officer efforts in this area on (i) percentage of all babies being immunised and vaccinated and (ii) incidence of the diseases being immunised and vaccinated against.

Mr. Sackville: The target payments scheme applies only to general practitioners. Details are set out by family health service authority (FHSA) as at 1 April 1992 in the table.

All those in the national health service responsible for immunisation deserve great credit for their efforts during the past four years. The latest national immunisation coverage estimates show acceptance of 95 per cent., for diphtheria, tetanus and polio, 93 per cent. for measles, mumps and rubella, and 91 per cent. for whooping cough; well on the way towards our target of at least 95 per cent. coverage for all these diseases by 1995. Indigenous diphtheria and neonatal tetanus no longer occur, and even measles and whooping cough cases are becoming rare in general practice. No child in England and Wales has died from acute measles-related illness since 1989.

Practice Target Achievement April 1992

FHSA	*Vacc and Imm Main Target*				*Vac and Imm Booster*			
	Higher		*Lower*		*Higher*		*Lower*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Northern								
Cleveland	71	80	17	19	54	61	26	29
Cumbria	95	94	3	3	93	92	5	5
Durham	67	83	11	14	65	80	13	16
Northumberland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gateshead	26	76	6	18	23	68	9	26
Newcastle	32	65	11	22	27	55	13	27
North Tyneside	31	86	3	8	25	69	10	28
South Tyneside	24	80	6	20	23	77	4	13
Sunderland	45	85	5	9	30	57	18	34
Yorkshire								
Humberside	136	82	26	16	93	56	60	36
North Yorkshire	108	94	5	4	109	95	4	3
Bradford	66	67	19	19	42	43	35	36
Calderdale	25	69	0	0	18	50	7	19
Kirklees	62	77	16	20	52	64	22	27
Leeds	89	67	19	14	76	58	27	20
Wakefield	35	73	7	15	24	50	11	23
Trent								
Derbyshire	151	94	3	2	146	91	6	4
Leicester	122	82	16	11	93	62	35	23
Lincolnshire	101	92	7	6	96	87	11	10
Nottingham	158	85	15	8	141	76	25	13
Barnsley	30	75	9	23	23	58	14	35
Doncaster	37	76	11	22	29	59	16	33
Rotherham	27	69	9	23	21	54	13	33
Sheffield	109	93	6	5	79	68	33	28
East Anglia								
Cambridge	91	92	6	6	88	89	7	7
Norfolk	103	90	6	5	103	90	7	6
Suffolk	85	98	2	2	83	95	4	5
North West Thames								
Bedfordshire	82	80	7	7	69	67	19	18
Hertfordshire	132	87	6	4	126	83	12	8
Barnet	51	65	8	10	45	57	9	11

FHSA	Vacc and Imm Main Target				Vac and Imm Booster			
	Higher		Lower		Higher		Lower	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Brent and Harrow	82	60	19	14	79	58	15	11
Ealing, Hammersmith, Hounslow	109	60	31	17	97	53	37	20
Hillingdon	39	70	13	23	35	63	13	23
Kensington, Chelsea, Westminster	39	32	13	11	34	28	11	9
North East Thames								
Essex	265	93	16	6	255	89	25	9
Barking and Havering	78	77	21	21	64	63	30	30
Camden and Islington	28	26	11	10	21	20	11	10
City and East London	49	28	19	11	40	23	21	12
Enfield and Haringey	71	56	17	14	54	43	21	17
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	60	47	26	20	54	43	26	20
South East Thames								
East Sussex	123	84	9	6	114	78	15	10
Kent	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Greenwich and Bexley	53	61	26	30	51	59	25	29
Bromley	40	71	12	21	41	73	9	16
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
South West Thames								
Surrey	138	88	10	6	127	81	20	13
West Sussex	95	85	2	2	91	81	6	5
Croydon	52	74	8	11	41	59	16	23
Kingston and Richmond	55	83	2	3	48	73	11	17
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	81	58	21	15	62	44	30	21
Wessex								
Dorset	103	95	4	4	106	98	1	1
Hampshire	211	93	8	4	203	90	16	7
Wiltshire	84	94	1	1	85	96	0	0
Isle of Wight	20	100	0	0	19	95	1	5
Oxford								
Berkshire	111	85	7	5	108	83	9	7
Buckinghamshire	86	92	3	3	81	87	8	9
Northamptonshire	81	94	4	5	74	86	10	12
Oxfordshire	85	97	0	0	85	97	0	0
South Western								
Avon	135	87	7	5	128	83	10	6
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	77	96	2	3	79	99	0	0
Devon	178	96	4	2	173	94	9	5
Gloucestershire	83	95	2	2	82	94	3	3
Somerset	76	97	1	1	75	96	2	3
West Midlands								
Hereford and Worcester	96	90	0	0	91	85	5	5
Shropshire	53	83	10	16	50	78	12	19
Staffordshire	156	80	25	13	133	68	45	23
Warwickshire	62	78	11	14	60	76	12	15
Birmingham	178	68	33	13	168	64	35	13
Coventry	51	74	14	20	54	78	10	14
Dudley	53	90	4	7	50	85	7	12
Sandwell	51	75	12	18	40	59	18	26
Solihull	31	97	1	3	30	94	2	6
Walsall	58	77	15	20	50	67	18	24
Wolverhampton	51	75	10	15	26	38	25	37
Mersey								
Cheshire	135	93	4	3	128	88	11	8
Liverpool	52	48	22	20	38	35	19	18
St. Helens and Knowsley	43	57	26	34	24	32	30	39
Sefton	38	69	11	20	34	62	9	16
Wirral	49	70	18	26	46	66	16	23
North Western								
Lancashire	228	80	34	12	176	62	53	19
Bolton	45	64	9	13	41	59	10	14
Bury	45	96	1	2	37	79	9	19
Manchester	59	52	28	25	35	31	24	21
Oldham	35	78	9	20	25	56	17	38
Rochdale	32	78	6	15	28	68	6	15
Salford	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Stockport	48	81	10	17	44	75	10	17
Tameside	31	74	8	19	29	69	9	21

FHSA	Vacc and Imm Main Target				Vac and Imm Booster			
	Higher		Lower		Higher		Lower	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Trafford	46	87	6	11	46	87	6	11
Wigan	42	61	11	16	29	42	13	19

Data are not yet available for four FHSAs: Northumberland; Kent; Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham; and Salford.

Community Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to apply citizens charter principles to the defining and recording of unmet need in the health and social services area for those segments of the population benefiting from care in the community.

Mr. Yeo: Our new community care arrangements represent an application of the principles of the citizens charter. Assessment puts the individual at the centre of the process so that services can be tailored to need rather than need to services. We have made clear that the results of assessments and the subsequent care plan should be discussed with users and carers and that authorities should collect and record the information they need to plan to improve their services.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 31 March 1993

DEFENCE

Depleted Uranium

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any of Her Majesty's armed forces *(a)* have been equipped since 1963 or *(b)* are currently equipped with United States weapons tipped with depleted uranium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only equipment which falls into this category is the US-manufactured Vulcan phalanx close-in weapons system which uses US-manufactured depleted uranium tipped ammunition, and which has been fitted in some Royal Navy surface ships since 1982.

The Army has United Kingdom-manufactured depleted uranium tank ammunition which was procured for, and used during, the Gulf conflict.

Army Static Workshop Productivity Scheme

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Touche Ross was given the task of reviewing the Army static workshop productivity scheme by means of competitive tender.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. Touche Ross provided the winning bid from six competitors.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the Touche Ross Army static workshop productivity scheme review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The fees paid for the report are a matter of commercial confidence between the Ministry of Defence and the company. It is not our practice to disclose such costs.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the defence establishments which were covered by the Touche Ross Army static workshop productivity scheme review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The review was conducted at a representative sample of three sites:

34 Base Workshop REME, Donnington
35 Base Workshop REME, Old Dalby
31 District Workshop REME, Catterick

A further seven sites will be affected by the review:

18 Base Workshop REME, Bovington
26 District Workshop REME, Stirling
27 District Workshop REME, Warminster
36 District Workshop REME, Colchester
43 District Workshop REME, Aldershot
44 District Workshop REME, Ashford
Engineer Resources Workship REME, Long Marston

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about defence agency status for the Army static workshops.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Army static workshops in Great Britain are to be established as a defence agency of the Ministry of Defence on 1 April 1993, under the new title of the Army base repair organisation. The Army base repair organisation comprises its headquarters at Andover, a contract repair branch and a network of base and district workshops. Together they employ some 3,581 civilian and 219 military staff.

The role of the Army base repair organisation ranges from minor repair to full refurbishment of equipment for the Army. The chief executive has to ensure that the service is available in peacetime and that it has the capacity to cope immediately with increased workloads in times of crisis and war.

Strategically placed workshops will provide a 24-hour, 365 days a year recovery service in direct support of Army units together with a repair facility to effect repairs beyond the capability of local units. Four workshops will provide an in-depth refurbishment and modification service, which is essential to the operational readiness of Army equipment. In addition, a separate division of the agency will provide a complementary service by contracting with industry for repair and refurbishment of equipments.

As the first chief executive, Brigadier J. R. Drew will be offered new opportunities to build on the current organisation's professional expertise and high performance standards. Through a more commercial approach, the chief executive will actively seek to improve the efficiency and value for money of his organisation.

The chief executive has been set the following targets for 1993-94.

1. To complete the repair programme to plan.
2. By 1 April 1994, to conduct a customer survey of quality and to institute a system for measuring the timeliness of the agency's output and to set improving targets for both.
3. To complete the market test of 18 base workshop by 1 April 1994.
4. To reduce by 5 per cent. the ratio of labour costs to hours of production by 1 April 1994.
5. By 1 October 1993, establish the value and the proportion of risk price contracts placed by the agency, and by 1 April 1994 set targets for increases in 1994-95.
6. To operate a full cost, accruals accounting system by 1 April 1994.

I have arranged for copies of the agency's framework document to be placed in the Library of both Houses.

Management Consultants

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which expenditure heading within his Department's budget includes the cost of employing management consultants; and what has been the total expenditure under this heading, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Aitken: The costs of management consultancy contracts can be attributed to various vote sub-items of the Defence budget. The total costs of employing management consultants for each of the last five years have been as follows:

Financial year	*£ million*
1987-88	5·140
1988-89	3·109
1989-90	5·292
1990-91	3·935
1991-92	5·700

Heavy Airlift Capability

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Ministry had with the United States Department of Defense on the latter's building up of military heavy airlift capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We maintain regular routine contacts with the United States Department of Defense on a range of issues including discussion of plans for military airlift capability.

Nuclear-powered Warships (Safety Committee)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his practice to list the Departments and agencies of Her Majesty's Government which are represented on the nuclear-powered warships safety committee.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The membership of the nuclear-powered warships safety committee includes experts from the Ministry of Defence, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate (Scottish Office), the Atomic Energy Authority, the National Radiological Protection Board and the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Married Quarters

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on future plans for the defence married quarters estate.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In February 1992, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence announced that the Ministry of Defence's housing task force had recommended that in order to provide a more responsive and cost-effective housing service for service personnel, the ownership and management of the Department's stock of married quarters in mainland Great Britain should be transferred to a new, non-profit making body in the private sector. The prospective transfer offered the prospect of providing a better planned, better maintained married quarters estate for our service men and service women. Service men and service women would continue to pay rents for their married quarters at levels recommended by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. My Department has been giving this proposal detailed consideration. I now propose to establish a non-profit making housing trust with a view to negotiating the terms of any eventual transfer to it of a long lease of the married quarters estate. Further detailed work will be required to evaluate and develop the concept before a final decision is taken on how best to proceed.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Landlord and Tenant Law

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to implement the recommendations in the Law Commission's report "Landlord and Tenant Law, Privity of Contract and Estate" (Law Com. No. 174).

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government have decided to implement these recommendations for the future leases but not for existing leases. This decision will affect only those agreements entered into after the commencement date of the necessary legislation, which will also provide for a statutory requirement in respect of both future and existing leases to encourage landlords to act promptly when suing for arrears of rent or service charges. Notice of any such claims against a former tenant will in future have to be served within nine months after the money becomes due.

Commercial Court

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of how the dates set for commercial court cases are affected by the changes in the number of judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Day-to-day deployment of High Court judges in the Queen's Bench Division is a matter for the Lord Chief Justice, but dates set for cases are affected by a number of factors apart from the availability of judges, including the length of case, interruptions of unplanned emergency business and cases overrunning the time estimates of the parties. In the recent announcement of plans to appoint additional High Court judges it was made clear that the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice had agreed that additional judge power would be made available to address any continuing problems in the commercial court.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the number of commercial court judges in each of the last four years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under section 6 of the Supreme Court Act 1981, the Lord Chancellor nominates the High Court judges who may be deployed to sit in the commercial court. Apart from the commercial judge himself, who is in charge of the list and who sits full time, the others who sit there are drawn according to need and availability from that pool of nominated judges. The number in the pool fluctuates from time to time because of promotions or retirements. In January 1990 there were 11 nominees and in July 1991 there were 12. At the end of December 1992 there were 10 nominees and at the present time there are 11. Throughout the period the equivalent of either five or six nominated judges have been deployed from the pool by the Lord Chief Justice to sit in the commercial court.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate the time it would take to recover the delays of cases taken from the commercial court list if there were available *(a)* five, *(b)* six and *(c)* seven specialist judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no fixed time within which cases before the commercial court are expected to come to trial. Dates set for cases are affected by factors beyond the number of judges sitting, including the readiness and availability of the parties and their witnesses. The commercial court operates a system of providing fixed dates and cases are generally listed for dates when parties have indicated they will be ready for trial. Though there has had to be some replanning of lists

recently, in relisting cases the convenience of the parties has been taken into account, particularly as many parties and their witnesses are from overseas. It is planned to make additional judge power available to the commercial court and there will be additional flexibility in the range of dates which may be offered to parties.

Land Registration

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimate he has made of the percentage of land acreage in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales which is not currently officially registered.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of her Majesty's Land Registry is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 30 March 1993.

As Chief Executive, it is my responsibility to answer questions on operational matters concerning HM Land Registry. The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has consequently asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to him concerning the percentage of land acreage in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales which is not currently officially registered.

I regret that statistics relating to registered land acreage are not maintained by the Registry. However, out of an estimated 19·7 million titles in England, 13·6 million are registered and out of an estimated 1·3 million titles in Wales 0·6 million are registered. The majority of registered titles relate to residential properties in urban areas.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the House library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to bring forward legislation to secure that compulsory registration of all land is undertaken in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under the existing provisions of the Land Registration Acts, land is compulsorily registered on sale throughout England and Wales. Over 14 million titles are now registered at Her Majesty's Land Registry and this will increase progressively as transactions occur.

In the citizens charter White Paper in November 1992 the Government announced their intention to explore ideas for completing the land register. Her Majesty's Land Registry has now issued a consultation document, "Completing the Land Register in England and Wales", which seeks views on whether the Land Registration Acts should be amended to speed up eventual completion of the register.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the last 12 months the Lord Chancellor's Department has let 29 commissions for the professional services required to manage its accommodation and develop new court buildings. Previously these services were provided by PSA Services. Lists of the commissions let follow.

The Department is currently market testing its internal audit services. The results will be known in the next few months.

The Lord Chancellor's Department's plans for next year are still under consideration.

The Lord Chancellor is also responsible for two executive agencies, the Public Record Office and Her Majesty's Land Registry. These are separate Government Departments and questions should normally, therefore, refer specifically to them. In this instance, as the questions concern an operational matter on which the chief executives of the agencies are best placed to provide an answer, I have asked them to reply direct.

Estate Management

Group/Circuit	*Managing Agent*
Kingston Group	Drivers Jonas
M. & O. Circuit	E. C. Harris
M. & O. Circuit	Bernard Thorpe
N. E. Circuit	Bernard Thorpe
HQ Building	PSA (BM) SE
London Group	McBains
N. Circuit	Grimley J. R. Eve
Maidstone Group	McBains
RCJ	Turner & Townsend
Wales & Chester	Torpy

Court building

Scheme	*Service*	*Company*
Docklands	Feasibility and design	Kyle Stewart
	Estate surveying	Knight Frank and Rutley
	Quantity surveying	C. F. Baker & Partners
Cardiff	Project management	W. S. Atkins
Crawley	Feasibility and design	PSA Projects
Staines	Feasibility and design	Kyle Stewart
Neath	Project management	W. S. Atkins
	Design	Powell Dobson
	Civil engineering	Travers Morgan

Scheme	Service	Company
Pontypridd	Project management	W. S. Atkins
	Design	Alex Gordon
	Structural engineering	Veryard and Partners
	Civil engineering	Hubert Jenkins
Leicester	Project management	CS Project Management
	Design and engineering	W. F. Johnson and Partners
	Quantity surveying	Silk and Frazier
Newport, Isle of Wight	Project management	TT Project Management
	Design	Rainey Petrie
Bournemouth	Project management	Widnell Project Management

Letter from Sarah Tyacke to Mr. Spencer Batiste, dated 25 March 1993:

As part of his reply to your recent Parliamentary Question as set out below, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department has asked me to write to you about market testing in the Public Record Office.

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subject to market testing within the next 12 months.

Date appeared: 24 March 1993. For Written Answer: 31 March 1993. PQ reference No. 93/261.

No professional services have been market tested at the Public Record Office within the last 12 months. The only professional service the Office is proposing to test within the next 12 months is internal audit.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask me.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. Spencer Batiste, dated 30 March 1993:

As Chief Executive, it is my responsibility to answer questions on operational matters concerning Her Majesty's Land Registry. The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department has consequently asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to him concerning the Agency's market testing of professional services.

Within the last 12 months, market testing exercises have been concluded on professional Building Management and Estates services and on certain professional legal services provided to the Land Registry. In both cases, contracts were awarded to organisations from the private sector.

The surveying services provided by both the Ordnance Survey and the Land Registry are currently being market tested but the review has not yet been concluded.

No further professional services are the subject of market testing in the current programme which ends on 30 September 1993. The Registry's programme for the following twelve months has not yet been finalised.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will be placed in the House Library.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department within what period he expects to introduce competitive tendering for legal aid franchises.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Any such developments will be discussed with the Legal Aid Board and the legal profession. No timetable has been set.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions the issue of competitive tendering for franchises to undertake legal aid work has been discussed with members and officials of the Legal Aid Board *(a)* by Ministers in the Lord Chancellor's Department and *(b)* officials.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The board has been kept in touch with the Lord Chancellor's thinking on the development of the legal aid scheme in the longer term, but no formal discussions have been held on competitive tendering.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether it is the intention of the Lord Chancellor to seek compulsory competitive tendering of legal aid work.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Competitive tendering may be an appropriate longer-term arrangement for the provision of certain publicly funded legal services. The Legal Aid Board and the legal profession will be consulted at the appropriate time.

Mary Winch

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if he will order a full investigation into the case of Mary Winch previously of Caernarfon now of Eastbourne; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to be able to reply to letters concerning Miss Mary Winch dated June 1991, 12 August 1991, 26 September 1991, 11 October 1991, 26 October 1991 and 16 May 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Miss Mary Winch has taken legal action against the public trustee which has not yet concluded. It would not be appropriate to comment whilst those proceedings are before the courts.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecutions

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Attorney-General what amendment he proposes to make to the undertaking given by the Solicitor-General on 25 April 1986 in relation to the reinstitution of proceedings which have been terminated, consequent upon the post of deputy Director of Public Prosecutions being put into abeyance.

The Attorney-General: The hon. Member refers to an assurance given during the course of the debate on 25 April 1986, at column 640, on prosecution policy.

The fundamental consideration remains that individuals should be able to rely on decisions taken by the prosecuting authorities. The policy of the Director of

Public Prosecutions is that a decision to terminate proceedings or not to prosecute should not, in the absence of special circumstances, be altered once it has been communicated to the defendant or prospective defendant unless it was taken and expressed to be taken because the evidence was insufficient. In such a case it would be appropriate to reconsider the decision if further significant evidence were to become available at a later date—especially if the alleged offence is a serious one.

Special circumstances which might justify departure from this policy include:

(1) rare cases where reconsiderations of the original decision show that it was not justified and the maintenance of confidence in the criminal justice system requires that a prosecution be brought notwithstanding the earlier decision; and

(2) those cases where termination has been effected specifically with a view to the collection and preparation of the necessary evidence which is thought likely to become available in the fairly near future. In such circumstances the CPS will advise the defendant of the possibility that proceedings will be re-instituted.

In the circumstances described at 1 and 2 the decision will be taken at chief crown prosecutor level with effect from 1 April 1993.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the report of the review of public appointments.

The Prime Minister: I will arrange for a copy of the latest report of the review of public appointments (1989) to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now publish the report of the Central Policy Review Staff in 1973 on the system of public appointments.

The Prime Minister: I do not know of such a report. The hon. Member may have in mind an inter-departmental working party of officials in 1974 which studied certain aspects of appointments in the public sector. Their advice recommended the establishment of the public appointments unit. I will arrange for a copy of the working party's report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those non-departmental public bodies which *(a)* have been abolished since 1979 and *(b)* have been established since 1979.

The Prime Minister: A full list of non-departmental public bodies in existence for each year since 1979 is available in the following publications: "Report on Non-Departmental Public Bodies" (Pliatzky Report, Cmnd 7797, January 1980), "Non-Departmental Public Bodies: Facts and Figures 1980", "Non-Departmental Public Bodies: Facts and Figures 1981", and "Public Bodies" published annually from 1982. Copies of these publications are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

For each year since 1986, a press notice has listed separately public bodies which have been created and abolished. Copies are being sent to the hon. Member, and to the Libraries of both Houses. Such summary data for the years 1979 to 1985 do not exist, and could be reconstructed only at disproportionate cost.

Coal Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on 25 March, *Official Report*, column 1223, if he will set out a detailed itemised breakdown of the annual expenditure of £18 billion invested in the British coal industry since 1979.

The Prime Minister: Grant aid made available to the coal industry since 1979 is set out in the table:

Grants[1] to British Coal and payments under the Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme[2]

Financial year	*Deficit and Deficiency Grants £ million*	*Operating Grants £ million*	*Social and Restructuring Grants £ million*	*Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme[2] £ million*	*Total £ million*
1979-80	159	30	62	15	266
1980-81	149	26	79	15	269
1981-82	428	27	120	48	623
1982-83	374	12	134	80	600
1983-84	875	—	270	190	1,335
1984-85	2,225	—	189	200	2,614
1985-86	50	—	513	563	1,126
1986-87	288	—	594	610	1,492
1987-88	200	—	477	295	972
1988-89	0	—	297	168	465
1989-90	6,153	—	1,090	126	7,369
1990-91	0	—	141	93	234
1991-92	0	—	457	61	518
1992-93[3]	0	—	622	43	665
TOTAL	10,901	95	5,045	2,507	18,548

[1] Grants to British Coal are at outturn prices, on an accruals basis, taken from British Coal's Annual Report and Accounts.
[2] Redundant Mineworkers Payments Scheme. Figures exclude administration costs.
[3] 1992-93 figures provisional.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *467*, if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy that a cessation of United Kingdom underground nuclear tests is dependent on the negotiations of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

The Prime Minister: Our policy has always been to keep our testing programme to the minimum necessary to maintain the safety and credibility of our deterrent. In the absence of a comprehensive test ban, whether we continued to test would naturally depend on our needs at the time, and whether they could be met by means other than testing. We believe any restraints on testing should be negotiated and verifiable.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the effect on the United Kingdom of legal and other restrictions applying to states to prevent their conducting nuclear tests.

The Prime Minister: The effect would depend on the scope and nature of such restrictions. If backed by effective verification and inspection mechanisms they could play a useful part in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In our approach to these issues we shall be seeking an outcome which ensures this objective is achieved, but which enables us to maintain the safety and credibility of our deterrent.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what detailed measures he is taking to satisfy himself that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise possess the expertise in timber technology to assess whether imports come from legal or illegal sources in relation to CITES.

The Prime Minister: In their enforcement of the CITES controls Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are assisted by a wide range of qualified experts from outside the Department. Where the identification of particular specimens of timber and their sources is necessary Customs will continue to seek the advice of qualified experts in this field.

Council Tax (Care Homes)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what consultation there has been between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Health on the imposition of council tax on charitable residential care accommodation ; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The two Departments have discussed a number of representations which have argued that residential care homes should be exempted from the council tax. Care homes will receive a number of reliefs, which will together mean that their council tax bills will be small. These bills represent a reasonable contribution to the cost of the local authority services from which care homes and their residents benefit.

Security Service

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Prime Minister when the annual report of the commissioner appointed under the Security Service Act 1989 will be laid before the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's third annual report, for 1992, has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 4(6) of the Security Service Act 1989. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 4(7) of the 1989 Act. I am grateful to the commissioner for his work in reviewing the issue of warrants and in providing assistance to the tribunal as provided in the Act. I note that he is satisfied that the Secretaries of State have properly exercised their powers under the Act and that the arrangements in force for ensuring that the service discloses information only in accordance with the provisions of the 1989 Act are working satisfactorily.

Interception of Communications

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Prime Minister when the annual report of the commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will be laid before the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of the right hon. Sir Thomas Bingham's first report, covering 1992, has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 8(7) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 8(8) of the 1985 Act. I am grateful to the commissioner for his report. I note in particular his observations that the Secretaries of State take great care to satisfy themselves that the warrants are necessary for the purposes stated in the Act, and that the system for the issue of warrants is working as intended by Parliament.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Advertisements

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to produce a code of practice on the use of women in advertisements.

Mr. Leigh: The codes of advertising practice administered by the advertisting industry's self-regulatory bodies require that advertisements be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Complaints about advertisements are judged against the prevailing standards of decency and acceptability and a separate code concerning the portrayal of women in advertising is unnecessary.

British Approvals Board for Telecommunications

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how long is the average time taken for a modem to receive BABT approval; and what steps he intends to take about misleading advertisements which do not clearly state when advertised modems are unapproved.

Mr. Leigh: The time taken for a modem to receive British Approvals Board of Telecommunications approval will vary greatly according to the design and complexity of the equipment, whether or not it complies with the standards, or requires further work by the applicant before compliance is achieved. BABT statistics indicate that a fully compliant "standard" modem, requiring no alteration at the testing stage, will take six to eight weeks from the date of acceptance of the test sample by the

laboratory to the issue by BABT of the type approval. BABT would expect to take two weeks of that period to evaluate test results, manufacturing details and documentation and, if satisfied, issue the certificate. The minimum recorded time is three weeks from application to approval.

Advertisement and display of the approval status of telecommunications terminal equipment is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications. He takes whatever action is appropriate to enforce the orders. The Department and Oftel, in consultation with manufacturers, operators and users, will continue to monitor and review the operation of the advertising orders.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current procedures for the obtaining of BABT approval for devices connected to the public telephone network, the length of time such approvals take and on his assessment of the need for the approval system as it currently operates.

Mr. Leigh: In common with virtually all developed countries, telecommunications terminal equipment must be approved before it can be legally connected to the United Kingdom public telecommunications network in order to protect the PTN, and its operators and users, from harm.

The British Approvals Board for Telecommunications is the approval authority in the United Kingdom for all types of telecommunications terminal equipment. It evaluates the applications, accompanying documentation, manufacturing details and test results on the equipment and, if satisfied, issues a type approval. As far as categorisation is possible, a "typical" type approval, for a single-line apparatus, would be expected to take eight to 12 weeks from the date the applicant submits a sample of the product to one of the five designated laboratories, to the issue of the type approval by BABT. The time spent at the test laboratory, in particular, necessarily varies greatly; major determinants include the complexity of the equipment and the level of testing required, whether the equipment passes first time or fails part of the testing schedule, needs adjustment by the manufacturer and testing again. For its part, BABT will normally carry out evaluation and issue of the approval within two weeks for a compliant product.

The United Kingdom is an acknowledged leader in Europe in liberalisation of equipment approvals procedures. Consistent with our EC obligations, we will continue to review, with BABT, Oftel and terminal manufacturers, network operators and users, ways of simplifying the United Kingdom approvals regime.

Assisted Area Status (Portsmouth)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to make an announcement on the result of the application by Portsmouth for assisted area status.

Mr. Heseltine: The needs and circumstances of all areas are being carefully considered in the assisted areas map review. The results will be announced as soon as possible, after the necessary clearance of the European Commission.

Cohesion Instrument and Fund

Mr. Milligan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he will take to ensure that all projects supported by the EC cohesion instrument and fund comply with EC environmental legislation and policy.

Mr. Eggar: The regulation governing the cohesion financial instrument will require the Commission to satisfy itself, before approving a project and during its implementation, that it complies with EC environmental legislation and policies, including where appropriate the carrying out of environmental impact assessments.

Energy Technology

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the criteria by which his Department assesses which energy technologies should receive research and development funding from his Department.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is currently carrying out a review of the basis of its support for science, technology, and innovation. Pending the outcome of that review, the aims of the Department in funding R and D into energy technologies remain broadly as they were for the former Department of Energy:

(a) to support work which would not otherwise be undertaken on an appropriate timescale or to the necessary extent to:
  (i) contribute to the maximum economic exploitation of the United Kingdom's energy resources;
  (ii) establish and develop economic options for energy supply and distribution;
  (iii) enable the Department to carry out its statutory and regulatory responsibilities;

(b) to encourage United Kingdom industry to develop capabilities, services, and technologies which will enable them to compete successfully in energy markets;

(c) to ensure the effective dissemination of the results of R and D work.

Trading Standards

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to transfer responsibility for the enforcement of part 2 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 from his departmental officials to local trading standards officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Part 2 of the Fair Trading Act concerns references to the Consumer Protection Advisory Committee and contains no enforcement provisions.

Direct Selling

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made as to the enforcement of the current legislation covering direct selling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: We are reviewing the legislation governing pyramid selling and similar trading schemes.

EC Regional Funds

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will now give his support to Britain seeking objective 2 status for the London region from the European Community.

Mr. Heseltine: The criteria for eligibility under objective 2 for the period from 1994 will be decided during the review of the structural funds regulations which has just begun. I do not expect decisions on the designation of specific areas to arise before the summer. It would therefore be premature to state now to which, if any, particular areas, we can give support.

Car Industry

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet a delegation of Ford representatives of employees, hon. Members and Members of the European Parliament at an early opportunity to discuss the future of the British car industry.

Mr. Heseltine: I have regular contact with people throughout the British motor industry. In particular my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and I met Ford senior management in January and discussed a wide range of issues with them. Further, last October my right hon. Friend met a delegation of Ford representatives and others led by the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and Carole Tongue, MEP for London East.

If the hon. Member, however, has specific issues about the industry that he wishes to raise I suggest that he write to me setting out his concerns.

Insurance Companies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether any insurance company is currently in breach of its solvency margin.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Yes, and those that are in breach are the focus of regulatory action.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what exemptions from normal Companies Acts disclosures are allowed to insurance companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: They are entitled to draw up their accounts in accordance with schedule 9A of the 1985 Companies Act, instead of the usual schedule 4, and may obtain various exemptions from disclosure in that way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the required solvency margins of insurance companies; what monitoring of these margins is undertaken by his Department; and in what form the results of this monitoring are published.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The margin of solvency for each insurance company is determined in accordance with part II of the Insurance Companies Regulations 1981. The principal method of monitoring the margin is the examination of the annual accounts and statements submitted in accordance with the Insurance Companies (Accounts and Statements) Regulations 1983. Copies of these accounts and statements, which include the solvency margin calculation, are available from Companies House. The Department's own monitoring results are not published.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether insurance companies are required to show equity assets at current market values in their accounts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In their accounts filed under the Companies Act 1985, schedule 9A allows equity assets to be valued at either cost or market value. In the annual returns made under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 it is normal to show equity assets at middle market value in accordance with section 46 of the Insurance Companies Regulations 1981.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action his Department takes when it discovers an insurance company has breached its solvency margin.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department issues a notice in accordance with either section 32 or section 33 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 requiring the company to submit a plan to restore a sound financial position or, in the case of the latter, a short-term financial scheme. It is also usual practice to hold a meeting with the company as a matter of urgency to try and establish what has caused the breach and to discuss remedies.

Sub-Post Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many sub-post offices have been proposed for closure since 1 October 1992; and how many were proposed for closure in the period between 1 April 1992 and 1 October 1992.

Mr. Leigh: Post Office Counters Ltd. has proposed 16 sub-post offices for closure since 1 October 1992, of which five have closed to date. Between 1 April 1992 and 1 October 1992, 25 sub-post offices were proposed for closure of which 23 have closed to date.

In addition, closures may occur, particularly in rural areas, where it has not been possible to find suitable replacement candidates for sub-postmasterships.

Wind Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to promote participation in the one-day workshop on local community wind energy projects being held at the Open university on 22 April, sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has agreed to provide £2,000 towards the running costs of this workshop, which is being organised by the British Wind Energy Association and the Energy and Environment Research Unit of the Open university. The promotion of participation in the workshop is the joint responsibility of those organisations.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the reasons why it is not practicable to supply full design information questionnaires on nuclear installations for the purpose of safeguards as stated in departmental memorandum EC/4140/93 on SEC(92)2360, at paragraph 5.1, dated 5 March.

Mr. Eggar: Much of the safeguards design information, which the present amendment envisages operators providing for new nuclear installations under the proposed new article 2 to the Regulation (Euratom) 3227/76, may not be available nine months before commencement of construction of an installation.

Electrical Goods

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to implement compulsory electro-magnetic compatibility testing for certain electrical goods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have no plans to implement compulsory electromagnetic compatibility testing for electrical/electronic products. The European Community directive on electromagnetic compatibility (89/336/EEC) was adopted in May 1989 and the United Kingdom regulations (SI 1992/2372) came into force in October 1992. They set down the basis for satisfying the essential protection requirements of the directive and the routes for demonstrating compliance. The most common route is likely to be by reference to harmonised standards and these determine, among other things, the tests which manufacturers may wish to conduct or have conducted on their behalf.

It is the responsibility of the manufacturer to decide which route to compliance is the most appropriate to ensure that the performance of his product satisfies the protection requirements of the directive.

Fuel Cell Technology

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the value of current assistance provided to British firms to help the development of fuel cell technology; and what forms such assistance takes.

Mr. Eggar: My Department promotes the development of solid oxide and solid polymer fuel cell systems through its advanced fuel cell R and D programme. Under this programme financial assistance is available for appropriate projects and the results are disseminated in order to guide future work. The programme budget for 1993-94 is £1·1 million.

South Africa

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on how British companies have complied with the European Community code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa during the 12-month period to 30 June 1992.

Mr. Heseltine: By 1 March 1993, 100 companies had submitted reports to the DTI under the code of conduct. Copies of the reports and of the Department's analysis and summary have, as in previous years, been placed in the Library of each House. These documents may also be inspected at the Department's export market information centre, at the British embassy in Pretoria, at the British consulate-general in Johannesburg, and at the British consulates in Cape Town and Durban.

The analysis and summary is the seventh since the adoption of the revised code of conduct by EC Foreign Ministers in November 1985. Reports were received from all British companies, except two, whose interests are known or believed to warrant a full report under the code. The two companies not reporting were reminded of the existence of the code and of the importance the Government attach to it.

The reporting period under review has seen a further decrease in the number of black employees of British subsidiaries being paid below the code's recommended minimum level. Companies' reports indicated that nearly 99 per cent. of employees were paid above this level.

The level of companies' involvement with trade unions representing black workers was maintained, with the majority of companies reporting formal involvement with the trades unions. Many companies have taken steps to alleviate the particular hardships experienced by their migrant workers.

As in previous years, all companies provided "on-the-job" training and many provided additional training facilities. Companies continued to report impressive levels of involvement in projects benefiting not only their employees and their families but the wider communities from which their work forces were drawn. Companies also continued to encourage the growth of black business.

The period covered by the report has seen the continuation of the recession in South Africa, with unemployment steadily increasing. Progress on the political front has been slower than expected. However, positive steps have been taken towards the achievement of a new democratic constitution and we hope that this will be taken forward when multi-party talks resume early next month.

The Government are once more grateful to companies for their continued co-operation in providing reports and urge them to maintain this performance and to comply fully with the code.

Export Intelligence Service

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will announce the results of his review of his Department's export intelligence service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: A study was conducted for my Department by consultants KPMG and I am grateful to all those who contributed to it. I have accepted the key finding of the review that the present system of matching United Kingdom firms expressed export interests with business opportunities reported from abroad does not fully meet the needs either of the United Kingdom which subscribe to it or of the potential foreign buyers seeking a United Kingdom source of supply of goods and services. But the review did conclude that the system generated some £200 million of extra exports annually. I have therefore decided that these sales justify continuation of export intelligence, but with operational improvements and the creation of a parallel source of supply system to answer foreign buyers' inquiries.

The contract signed in 1989, now with Prelink Ltd., to operate the marketing, matching and distribution of export intelligence has generally worked well. Consequently, I have decided to accept its proposal for introducing the changes to export intelligence and for setting up a new source of supply service from 1 April 1993. I am extending its contract to 31 March 1998.

Opencast Coal Mining

Mr. Dover: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the contribution to British Coal from privately operated opencast sites and *(b)* the subsidy to British Coal from the Exchequer for the latest year for which both figures are available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* The contribution to British Coal from private sector licensed opencast sites is not recorded separately in their accounts. However, the total royalties receivable from licensed opencast sites and deep mines amounted to £14 million in 1991-92. The corporation's opencast sites are operated by private sector contractors and generated an operating profit of £171 million in that year. Government grant income credited to the corporation's accounts in that year was £457 million.

Fuel Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the expected effect of the imposition of value added tax for domestic fuel bills on *(a)* energy consumption, *(b)* the demand for electricity and *(c)* the market for coal-fired electricity.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 March 1993]:* The impact of introducing VAT at the standard rate would reduce energy consumption and electricity demand in the aggregate by less than 1 per cent. Decisions in the market place would determine the effect on coal-fired among sources of electricity.

Aviation Committee

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how often Ministry of Defence representatives have attended meetings of the aviation committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Representatives of the Ministry of Defence or its agencies have attended every meeting of the aviation committee held over the last three years.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the aviation committee was established within his Department.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The answer is 1986.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions in each year the aviation committee has met.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The Aviation Committee has met on three occasions each year except for 1986 when it met twice, 1987 when it met on four occasions, and 1989 when it met once.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the current membership of the aviation committee.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry gave on 11 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *720*.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the launch aid given to each sector of the manufacturing industry in each of the last five years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Launch aid is provided under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and is available only to the aerospace industry. Launch aid received by the aerospace industry in each of the last five years is as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	31·3
1991-92	78·7
1990-91	141·1
1989-90	133·6
1988-89	98·4

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the projected launch aid to be given to each sector of the manufacturing industry for each of the next two financial years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Launch aid is provided under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and is available only to the aerospace industry. Projected launch aid to be given in 1993-94 is £2·6 million. At this stage there are no plans to provide launch aid in 1994-95.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the repayments of launch aid made by each sector of manufacturing industry for each of the last five years.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Launch aid is provided under the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and is only available to the aerospace industry. Repayments of launch aid received by the aerospace industry in each of the last five years is as follows:

	£ millions
1992-93	69·5
1991-92	82·9
1990-91	51·8
1989-90	41·9
1988-89	19·9

Coal Mines

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that, as part of any deregulation steps being taken by the Government in relation to the coal mines, there is full discussion with the trade unions on questions relating to safety standards in private coal mines; and if he will consult the Health and Safety Executive before taking any final decisions.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The Government are determined that there should be no lowering of safety standards in coal mines. It is for the Health and Safety Commission and its executive to regulate safety in the coal industry in consultation with all interested bodies, including the trade unions. My Department will continue to keep the Commission informed about developments in the industry.

Timber and Paper Products

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many prosecutions have been brought under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, concerning claims of the environmental friendliness and sustainability of timber and paper products in each of the last five years; and how many such prosecutions have been successful in each year.

Mr. Leigh *[pursuant to his answer, 28 January 1993, column 817]:* It has been brought to my attention that the statistics provided in that answer were incorrect. Regrettably, those statistics, which were produced by the Office of Fair Trading, concerned prosecutions under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 involving all types of statement, rather than only environmental claims, about timber and paper products. In fact, none of the prosecutions covered by the statistics involved environmental claims. Thus, my reply should have stated that the OFT has not been notified of any prosecutions by local authorities under the TDA concerning claims of the environmental friendliness and sustainability of timber and paper products over the last five years—1988 to 1992 inclusive. I offer my apologies to the House for giving incorrect information in my original reply.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which Departments appointed consultants or accountancy firms as advisers on market testing after seeking competitive bids.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not held centrally.

European Social Science Project

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, *Official Report*, column *604*, on costs of European science projects, if he will list the annual costs of the four largest European social science research projects.

Mr. Jackson: Full information is not available. The following are the four largest social science research projects within Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded centres which have received European Community (EC) funding and which have a European dimension:

1. The ELSNET (Network of Excellence in Language and Speech), operated by the ESRC-funded Research Centre in Human Communication at the University of Edinburgh, is wholly supported by European Community (EC) funding at a cost of £162,000 per annum.
2. The ESRC-funded Research Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics received £118,000 from November 1991 to August 1992 from the EC for its Technical Assistance Programme to the Russian Government.
3. The ESRC-funded Research Centre for the Study of African Economies at the University of Oxford attracted direct funding from the EC of £63,000 for a project "Sixth European Development Fund: MSc teaching at Addis Ababa University".
4. An ESRC-funded project entitled "Farm Structures and Household Pluriactivity in Europe" is being undertaken by Arkleton Trust Research Ltd. over a period of three years and nine months, at a cost of £45,932 per annum.

EDUCATION

English Tests

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) pursuant to his answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column 408, if he will publish the name of the agency, commissioned by the School Examinations and Assessment Council, to undertake an internal evaluation of the 1992 pilot English tests for 14-year-olds; and what was the cost of the evaluation;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column 408, if he will place a copy of the report of the evaluation commissioned by the School Examinations and Assessment Council, of the 1992 pilot English tests in the Library.

Mr. Forth: The evaluation was undertaken by the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB) as part of its contract with SEAC to write tests for 14-year-olds in English. The total cost of the contract was £206,000, covering the period September 1991 to September 1992. It is not possible to disaggregate the cost of the evaluation in particular.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Boswell: The number and percentage of women and disabled staff in each grade requested and the overall number in the Department as at 1 March 1993 are as follows:

Grade	*Women*	*Per cent.*	*Disabled*	*Per cent.*
1-4	0	0	0	0
5	14	32	1	2
6	1	6	0	0
7	49	29	0	0
Overall	1,280	59	68	3

The figures for disabled staff cover only those registered as disabled. The Department also has members of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

We do not hold information on the ethnic origin of all our staff but of those who have responded to date to the ethnic monitoring survey—98·5 per cent.—those from ethnic minorities are as follows:

Grade	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1-6	0	0
7	6	4
Overall	173	8

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: A survey of the ethnic origins of staff was undertaken in 1990, since when our database has been continuously updated as new staff join the Department. We currently hold ethnic origin data on 98·5 per cent. of our staff. The number of women in the Department is monitored annually in December.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Boswell: Recruitment of grades above administrative officer is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency on behalf of the civil service commissioners. Recruits to the senior grades, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Orders in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community. These steps include extending links with institutions of higher education; equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; and using validated selection procedures.

Undergraduates (Tuition Fees)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure in respect of tuition fees for undergraduate courses in universities and

polytechnics for 1991-92; and how much of this was for students not qualifying for a mandatory maintenance award on grounds of high parental income.

Mr. Boswell: The total expenditure in the academic year 1991-92 by local education authorities in England and Wales on fees paid by them as part of mandatory awards for students attending first degree courses is provisionally estimated at £1,021 million. It is not possible to estimate how much of this expenditure was for students not qualifying for a mandatory maintenance award on the ground of high parental income. However, about 27 per cent. of all first degree students in receipt of a mandatory award received no maintenance grant as a result of means-testing.

Further Education

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what conditions are attached to the disposal of Exchequer-funded land and buildings by colleges in the new further education sector.

Mr. Patten: The conditions will be the same as those which have applied to universities since 1985, and to institutions in the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council sector since 1989—*Official Report*, 15 January 1985, columns *91-92* and 26 March 1991, column *359*. They will similarly allow colleges in the further education sector to retain the proceeds of sale of Exchequer-funded land and buildings, within specified limits agreed by the Secretary of State, without reference to the annual supply procedures. These conditions are among those set out in the financial memorandum between the Department and the Further Education Funding Council, a copy of which I will be placing in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Squatting

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to change the law on squatting; and what conclusions he has reached as a result of responses made last year to his consultative paper on unlawful occupation of property.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 3 February 1993 at column *203*.

Keith Twitchell

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be in a position to conclude whether there are grounds to refer the conviction of Keith Twitchell to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 following representations made by Mr. Twitchell's solicitors in June 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to be in a position to reach a decision shortly.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in reaching a common position with respect to the European Commission's proposals for a data protection directive; and what level of support the United Kingdom Government have obtained from other member states with respect to *(a)* the inclusion of manual files, *(b)* data subject consent, *(c)* restrictions on the processing of sensitive personal data and *(d)* notification to the data subject of the first disclosure made by a third party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The council working party has not yet concluded its initial consideration of the revised text of the draft directive. The range of views expressed on each of the matters mentioned by the hon. Member is very wide, but it would not be appropriate for me to disclose the negotiating position of individual member states. The extent of agreement with the United Kingdom position varies from issue to issue. A closer alignment of views may be expected as negotiations continue.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has which relates to the costs already experienced by other member states who have extended data protection to *(a)* include manual files, *(b)* require data subject consent, *(c)* place restrictions on the processing of sensitive personal data and *(d)* include notification to the data subject of the first disclosure made by a third party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no such information.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the estimated costs of the United Kingdom satisfying the European Commission's data protection directive in relation to *(a)* the inclusion of manual files, *(b)* data subject consent, *(c)* restrictions on the processing of sensitive personal data and *(d)* notification to the data subject of the first disclosure made by a third party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Home Office has asked a wide range of organisations for their views on, and estimates of the cost of complying with, the draft directive. Only a proportion have felt able to make such estimates, and there is insufficient consistency in the methods used for any composite figures to be meaningful. It is clear, nevertheless, that the cost implications for many sectors would be substantial.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the cancellation of the Taurus computer system by the stock exchange has had on the need for the Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) (Amendment) Order 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter LLoyd: The continuing need for the order will be considered following the report of the task force on securities settlement which has been set up by the Bank of England to consider the way forward following the cancellation of the Taurus project.

Police Forces (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consultations he has had in Wales with (i) the Magistrates Association, (ii) chief police officers and (iii) the Assembly of Welsh Councils, concerning changes in the organisation of police forces;

(2) if he will meet the Assembly of Welsh Councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend made a statement about the future of the police service in England and Wales on 23 March. On the same day he met the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the chairman of the Association of County Councils to discuss the proposals which were set out in his statement. He has no plans at present to meet the Assembly of Welsh Counties, the Magistrates Association or individual chief police officers.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police headquarters he has visited in Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Dog Attacks

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his best estimate of the number of attacks carried out by dogs on *(a)* human beings and *(b)* other animals each year; and what information is available on the type of dog responsible in each case.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Magistrates Association

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he met the Magistrates Association.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend last met members of the Magistrates Association at its Nottinghamshire branch on 19 February. He will be meeting the chairman and other representatives of the association shortly.

Coroners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been made about coroners in 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have received 25 such complaints.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On the most recent figures for those who have responded to ethnic origin surveys carried out by the Department, in the unified grades 1 to 7, 42 —that is 10 (5·2 per cent.) at grade 5; 24 (10·5 per cent.) at grade 6; and eight (0·7 per cent.) at grade 7—classified themselves as being of ethnic minority origin, representing 0·2 per cent. of the total number who responded in all main grades.

On 25 March 1993, 180 staff in the unified grades 1 to 7 were women, representing some 22 per cent. of staff in those grades. In the unified grades, 7 (28 per cent.) staff at grade 3, 22 (23 per cent.) at grade 5, 10 (10 per cent.) at grade 6 and 141 (25 per cent.) at grade 7 were women. There are no women in grades 1, 2 or 4.

On 1 July 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 185 members of staff in the Home Office were registered disabled, representing 0·4 per cent. of all staff. There were no registered disabled staff at grades 1 to 7. The Department employs many other people with disabilities who have chosen not to register, but no record has been kept of such staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Most senior posts in the Department are filled internally by promotion. The Home Office is committed to ensuring that all staff—regardless of race, gender, disability or any other relevant factor—have equal access to opportunities for training, promotion and career development. A wide range of measures is in place to give effect to this policy.

Recruitment direct to specific senior posts is generally conducted by the Recruitment and Assessment Services on behalf of the Home Office, on the basis of fair and open competition.

In the prison service, particular efforts have been made in recent years to recruit women and members of the ethnic minorities to the accelerated promotion scheme, which prepares staff for senior positions in the service.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All non-industrial staff in the Home Office who had not responded to earlier surveys were asked to state their ethnic origin in a further voluntary survey, conducted over the past 12 months. This has significantly increased the database of staff ethnic backgrounds, which now covers 90 per cent. of staff in the Home Office (non-prisons) and 74 per cent. of non-industrial staff in the prison service. Further steps will be taken to maintain and increase the database. People seeking posts in the Department are asked to state their ethnic origins when making their applications. No survey of industrial staff in the Department has yet been carried out, but measures are in hand to address this. There is no need for a survey of women since the gender of employees is identified in staff records.

Crime

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals he has to reduce the level of crime committed by those of school age in the north-west region;

(2) what action he proposes to take to combat crime in the north-west region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The Government have encouraged the police and other agencies in the development of effective crime prevention programmes and have funded a number of

initiatives aimed at tackling crime, including youth crime. The Home Office safer cities projects in the north-west —Rochdale, Salford and Wirral—are major crime prevention initiatives which include schemes aimed at diverting the young away from crime. We have also established local drugs prevention teams in Manchester, Salford and the Wirral with the aim of tackling the spread of misuse, particularly amongst the young. In addition the probation service grant scheme provides funding for eight projects in the north-west region, which in the main provide programmes of supervision or support for young offenders and defendants. There are also over 16,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in the region covering almost 500,000 households.

The Department for Education announced recently that Lancashire and Manchester are each to receive £147,000 under its grants for education support and training (GEST) programme for youth crime prevention schemes in 1993-94. School community action teams are also in operation in secondary schools in Lancashire carrying out a range of crime prevention activity. Diversionary projects for young people and other schemes to reduce crime and the fear of crime, including property security measures, will be financed under the Department of the Environment's city challenge programme in Wirral, Manchester, Liverpool, Blackburn, Wigan, Sefton and Bolton.

Under its estate action programme Lancashire will receive £7·9 million, Greater Manchester £29 million and Merseyside £36·8 million in 1992-93 for improvements to run down council estates. These improvements will, among other things, led to reduction in crime and vandalism.

As part of its programme of action on youth crime for 1993, the Government-supported independent organisation Crime Concern is planning a series of regional seminars, one of which is to be held in the north-west, on best practice in diverting young people away from crime. The Government recently announced plans to introduce a new sentence of detention to secure facilities for 12 to 15-year-old boys and girls who persistently re-offend and for whom supervision in the community has been ineffective.

Violence Against Women

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to adopt the draft international declaration on violence against women into British law.

Mr. Jack: The Government take very seriously the need to tackle violence in society and have taken a number of steps in recent years against violence against women. A summary was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on 29 March at columns *103-04*. We have strongly supported the development of the draft United Nations declaration on the elimination of violence against women, and share its aims of encouraging internationally both condemnation of violence against women and commitment to its elimination. Any implications of the final declaration for the law in this country will be considered carefully.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish arrest rates for cases of domestic violence for each police authority area.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department is in the process of market testing its internal audit and accountancy advice services and we expect to reach conclusions by the end of September.

The market testing programme for 1993-94 has yet to be settled.

Sexual Crimes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what statutory commitments are currently in place to help victims of sexual crimes to resume a normal life; and what plans he has to extend such statutory provision.

Mr. Jack: Some of the most important means of helping victims of all crimes recover from their experiences are non-statutory. These include the work of the national charity Victim Support which, with Home Office funding, provides much-appreciated emotional support and practical help to victims, including victims of rape and other serious crimes of violence. Victims of sexual offences, as of other crimes of violence, are also eligible for compensation from the non-statutory criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Statutory provisions, in addition to the national health service—which may be able to provide counselling for victims—and Department of Social Security benefits, include the power of courts to order offenders to pay compensation to their victims, and protection—for the complainants' lifetime—from publicity in cases of rape and sexual assault.

There are no plans to extend statutory powers in this area.

Royal Households (Police Protection)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to make the police officers assigned to protecting royal households supernumerary to the force establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Where there is a permanent need for protection duties, additional posts are approved and incorporated into force establishments.

Gloucestershire Constabulary

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that Gloucestershire constabulary is staffed to the level recommended by the chief constable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under the present system, approvals of bids for extra posts for police forces are given on the basis of relative need. As a result of current economic circumstances, no increases have been approved for the coming financial year.

Parole

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance has been given for the Parole Board to take into account when considering the release, transfer to open conditions and recall of mandatory life sentence prisoners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: For reviews of mandatory life sentence prisoners which begin at the prison from 1 April, the parole board will be giving reasons for recommendations and Ministers will be giving reasons for their decisions. It is important, therefore, that the board and prisoners have a clear understanding of the criteria against which recommendations and decisions are made. I have, therefore, written to the chairman of the parole board giving him directions under section 32(6) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 setting out the matters which the parole board should take into account when discharging its functions. I have also provided the board with guidance for the training of its members. Copies of the letter, the directions and training guidance have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rave Parties

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to tackle the problems caused by illegal raves and by mass trespass on land.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment today announced a package of proposals designed to tackle illegal camping as a consequence of his review of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

The Government recognise that these measures alone will not be sufficient to deal with all types of illegal camping. Since the enactment of the Public Order Act 1986 there has been special provision for dealing with aggravated trespass: that is, trespass where, either because of the sheer numbers involved or because of the behaviour of trespassers, it is right that the police should have powers to intervene. Section 39 of the 1986 Act has worked well, but the Government believe that it can be made more effective. Therefore, we propose to apply section 39 to a wider range of circumstances, principally extending it to minor highways—including green lanes and byways open to all traffic—and reducing the number of vehicles required to trigger the powers from 12 to six.

We also propose to take additional measures to deal with the illegal large raves which made life so miserable for so many people last summer. We propose to provide new powers to enable the police, where they reasonably believe that 10 or more people have gathered on a site and that a rave will take place with the result that a local community will suffer serious distress on account of music played during the night, to direct those people to leave. Failure to heed such a direction will be a criminal offence. In order that the police may enforce this effectively, we propose to provide them additionally with powers to turn back within a radius of five miles anyone they reasonably believe is intending to go to the rave site.

These measures are unusual, but the Government believe that they are justified in the light of the serious mischief they are seeking to prevent and that they will be welcomed by law-abiding citizens throughout the country.

Immigration

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for introducing an independent element into the procedures for handling complaints against the Immigration and Nationality Department.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Complaints against the Immigration and Nationality Department—including those involving the immigration service—are thoroughly investigated, and complainants informed of the outcome. My right hon. and learned Friend has, however, decided that confidence in the complaints system would be enhanced if there were an independent means of monitoring the health of the system. He intends to appoint a complaints audit committee, comprising three members. The committee's remit will be to satisfy itself as to the effectiveness of the procedures for investigating complaints; to draw IND management's attention to any weakness; and to make an annual report to my right hon. and learned Friend. The committee will have access to all papers on complaints investigations, but will not be involved in the investigation of individual complaints or decisions in individual cases. The powers of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration are unaffected.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Indirect Taxes

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *684*, on the level of indirect taxes, giving figures for 1993-94.

Sir John Cope: At this time it is possible to give the answer only in respect of current duty levels. The figures in the table therefore relate to duty rates immediately after the Budget. This is different from the method used in the previous answer which covered the whole financial year, so for comparison the equivalent figures for 1992-93 are also shown. These differ from the answer of 25 November also because the method of calculating real increases has been adjusted. Ad valorem taxes have not been covered, except for cigarettes where the ad valorem element is included in addition to the specific duty. Aviation gasoline was not subject to duty in 1978-79.

	Duty Unit	Post-Budget Duty Rate: 1987	1992	1993	Percentage increase in real terms from 1978 to: 1992	1993
Hydrocarbon Oils						
Leaded petrol	Pence per litre	6·60	27·79	30·58	49·6	61·6
Unleaded petrol	Pence per litre	6·60	23·42	25·76	26·1	36·1
Derv	Pence per litre	7·70	22·85	25·14	5·4	13·9
Made Wine						
not exceeding 18 per cent.	£ per hectolitre	76·45	217·25	220·43	11·0	10·6
exceeding 18 per cent.	£ per hectolitre	84·14	250·59	220·43	16·4	0·6
Spirits	£ per litre	5·96	19·81	19·81	18·1	15·9
Beer	£ per hectolitre for each degree above 1,000	0·35	1·108	1·163	12·5	15·9
Cider and Perry	£ per hectolitre	5·32	21·32	22·39	42·4	46·8
Tobacco						
cigarettes	£ per 1,000	17·70	67·53	72·45	35·5	42·8
cigars	£ per kilogram	20·94	67·89	72·30	15·2	20·4
hand rolling tabacco	£ per kilogram	20·28	71·63	76·29	25·5	31·2

Bank of England

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions since 1963 the Treasury has exercised its power under section 4 of the Bank of England Act 1946 to give directions to the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Family Expenditure Survey

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he hopes to publish the results of his Department's family expenditure survey; what has been the cost of carrying out this survey; if he will send the hon. Member for Don Valley a copy of the questionnaire that interviewees were asked to complete over a two-week period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I hope to publish the 1992 family expenditure survey in October 1993. The running cost of the family expenditure survey for the year 1992-93 is approximately £3·4 million. A copy of the 1992 questionnaire and diary has been sent to the hon. Member and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Nelson: No such services have been tested within the last 12 months. The Treasury's market testing programme for the period up to 30 September 1993 was set out on page 64 of the first report on the citizens charter (Cm 2010) and covers a number of professional services including economic model building and development, internal audit and consultancy inspection services. No decisions have been taken about market testing in 1993-94.

National Debt

Mr. Shore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current ratio of United Kingdom national debt to gross domestic product; and what it will be in 1997-98 on the assumption that the public sector borrowing requirement will increase as set out in table 2B.5 of the financial statement for 1993-94.

Mr. Lamont: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on 29 March 1993 at column *17*.

Overseas Securities

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what regulations he intends to introduce to implement the legislation for the lending of overseas securities and for payments of manufactured overseas dividends on such securities.

Mr. Dorrell: Regulations are being laid today to bring into effect the new legislation on payments of manufactured overseas dividends in section 58 and schedule 13 of the Finance Act 1991. Further regulations will shortly be made under the provisions contained in schedule 23A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act —introduced by schedule 13 of the Finance Act 1991—to set out the arrangements for accounting for tax on manufactured overseas dividends. Regulations will also be made at the same time to bring into effect, for overseas securities, the amendments to the stock lending rules contained in section 57 of the Finance Act 1991.

The amendments to the stock lending rules will allow lending chains to contain more than three parties without tax charges arising on disposals of securities from one party to the next. This relaxation is designed to enhance the liquidity of the London market in overseas securities and the role of London as a major financial centre.

The arrangements for accounting for tax on manufactured overseas dividends have been discussed in detail with market representatives over the past two years. They differ from the proposals outlined by my predecessor in the Committee stage debate on schedule 13—introduced as schedule 12—of the 1991 Finance Bill. However, the new arrangements, like those originally envisaged, aim to balance freedom for the markets with adequate protection for the Exchequer against the main risks of tax loss.

Inheritence Tax

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many landowners in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire and *(c)* England have been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures are not available on a constituency basis but in Lancashire six properties have benefited from conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital

transfer tax. There have been 121 designations of land for conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax in England and 104 designations of historic buildings in England.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column 418, what criteria are used in determining the extent of the publicity on public access to land where the owners are claiming exemption from inheritance tax by virtue of section 31 of the Inheritance Taxes Act 1984.

Mr. Dorrell: The heritage advisory agencies will discuss, with each owner, the appropriate level of publicity to be given to public access arrangements agreed in return for conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax. Each case is considered individually and all relevant factors, including the existing level of publicity, are taken into account.

VAT

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each VAT office the number of registrations and deregistrations for each year since 1989.

Sir John Cope: The information requested is as follows:

	Registrations				*Deregistrations*			
Local VAT Office	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Aberdeen	2,440	2,378	2,021	2,036	1,862	1,818	2,080	1,832
Accrington	2,807	2,680	2,298	2,114	2,200	2,050	2,911	2,369
Balham	3,959	3,097	2,791	2,545	2,304	2,468	3,282	3,282
Bath	3,259	2,545	2,168	2,297	2,103	2,114	2,848	2,912
Bedford	3,222	2,909	2,160	1,784	1,742	2,359	2,550	2,389
Belfast	1,497	1,611	1,273	1,343	1,190	1,165	1,413	1,557
Birmingham North	2,631	2,372	2,068	1,983	1,747	1,729	2,470	2,552
Birmingham South	2,246	2,080	1,840	1,842	1,651	1,560	2,116	2,168
Bradford	2,781	2,584	2,160	2,162	1,937	2,007	2,857	2,434
Brighton	4,317	3,448	2,756	2,646	2,848	2,682	4,268	3,513
Bristol	3,387	2,908	2,416	2,049	1,982	2,338	3,221	2,479
Bury	2,312	1,980	2,086	1,893	1,767	1,575	2,333	2,163
Cambridge	0	0	2,094	2,056	0	0	2,673	2,726
Canterbury	3,610	3,062	1,931	1,668	2,612	2,662	3,322	2,779
Cardiff	3,171	2,841	2,209	3,029	2,124	2,090	3,168	3,334
Carlisle	2,040	1,783	1,466	1,351	1,596	1,462	1,932	1,743
Carmarthen	1,492	1,285	1,023	0	1,044	1,136	1,586	79
Cheadle	3,177	2,803	2,873	2,532	2,108	1,965	2,763	3,005
Chester	3,033	2,852	2,736	2,501	2,211	2,259	3,334	3,269
Chesterfield	2,787	2,320	2,198	1,980	2,026	1,982	2,519	2,607
City	2,590	2,510	2,146	4,750	2,110	2,414	2,318	4,525
Colchester	3,484	3,243	2,588	2,556	2,224	2,489	3,760	3,482
Coleraine	1,195	1,218	1,014	1,354	1,008	937	1,158	1,088
Colwyn Bay	1,835	1,699	1,415	1,247	1,367	1,369	1,960	1,739
Coventry	2,607	2,439	2,203	1,993	1,708	1,895	2,540	2,560
Croydon	3,428	3,076	2,303	2,120	2,122	2,070	3,220	3,077
Derby	2,643	2,310	1,978	1,805	1,892	1,652	2,475	2,168
Doncaster	2,877	2,389	2,081	1,989	2,231	1,949	2,590	2,464
Droitwich	3,023	2,528	2,275	2,016	2,188	1,880	2,672	2,440
Dudley	2,738	2,131	1,889	1,730	1,871	1,748	2,475	2,424
Dundee	2,693	2,645	2,152	2,080	1,996	2,099	2,372	2,384
Edinburgh	3,095	2,850	2,494	2,488	2,184	2,148	2,988	2,541
Enfield	3,583	3,087	2,459	2,595	2,367	2,575	3,263	3,533
Euston	1,429	1,493	1,264	22	1,034	1,081	1,399	184
Exeter	3,160	2,771	2,165	1,886	2,229	2,341	3,397	3,049
Finchley	3,635	3,124	2,575	2,287	2,063	2,342	2,964	3,070
Glasgow North	3,454	3,129	2,615	2,526	2,599	2,492	2,987	2,818
Glasgow South	2,327	2,172	2,138	1,840	1,642	1,569	2,612	2,160
Gloucester	3,532	3,102	2,746	2,261	2,305	2,465	3,417	2,680
Greenock	2,516	2,176	1,975	1,822	2,038	2,117	2,436	2,055
Grimsby	3,190	2,657	2,073	1,924	2,347	2,254	2,930	2,840
Halifax	3,284	2,646	2,486	2,147	2,256	2,318	3,043	2,652
Hammersmith	2,435	2,363	1,967	2,043	1,481	1,660	2,038	2,807
Harlow	3,409	2,981	2,008	1,917	1,803	2,009	2,510	2,333
Hastings	0	684	2,371	2,180	0	554	3,229	3,251
Holborn	1,327	1,287	1,204	0	1,088	958	960	130
Hull	2,739	2,483	2,164	1,954	1,939	2,039	2,746	2,416
Ipswich	2,820	2,463	1,811	1,634	1,930	2,141	2,457	2,211
Kennington	2,676	2,173	2,114	2,025	1,750	1,916	2,720	2,436
Kingston	2,842	2,956	2,614	2,523	1,850	2,157	3,004	2,875
Leeds	2,443	2,394	2,144	2,004	1,678	1,971	2,385	2,417
Leicester	3,216	2,879	2,161	2,072	2,229	2,121	2,792	2,536
Lisburn	1,682	1,397	1,320	977	1,026	1,011	1,212	950
Liverpool	2,309	2,217	1,868	1,761	2,068	1,790	2,273	2,531
Luton	2,574	2,200	2,320	2,166	1,510	1,549	2,708	2,544
Lytham	3,243	3,084	2,596	2,382	2,472	2,476	3,167	2,976
Maidenhead	3,033	2,630	2,189	2,285	1,806	1,783	2,581	2,515
Maidstone	3,942	3,358	2,273	2,011	2,340	2,520	3,214	2,885
Manchester	2,903	3,358	2,646	2,452	2,041	2,223	2,903	2,774
Middlesbrough	3,156	2,631	2,158	2,212	2,102	2,416	2,825	2,818
Newcastle Under Lyme	2,909	2,806	2,081	2,064	2,018	2,089	2,567	2,653

Local VAT Office	Registrations 1989	1990	1991	1992	Deregistrations 1989	1990	1991	1992
Newcastle Upon Tyne	2,349	2,041	1,744	1,624	1,743	1,681	2,119	2,061
Northampton	3,523	3,051	2,134	1,957	2,211	2,219	2,785	2,544
Norwich	3,321	2,769	2,071	1,815	2,369	2,524	3,133	2,676
Nottingham	2,793	2,535	2,155	1,730	1,752	2,080	2,909	2,209
Oldham	2,814	2,756	2,196	2,268	2,132	1,828	2,661	3,076
Orpington	3,572	3,149	2,383	2,213	1,921	1,824	3,752	3,535
Oxford	2,907	2,439	2,370	2,081	1,813	1,871	2,684	2,529
Peterborough	3,136	3,325	2,446	2,191	2,282	2,600	3,106	2,797
Plymouth	4,019	3,139	2,671	2,390	2,765	2,702	3,955	3,981
Poole	3,791	2,941	2,304	2,116	2,615	2,360	2,943	3,583
Portsmouth	4,344	3,409	2,876	2,641	2,601	2,260	3,872	3,688
Reading	3,303	3,238	2,728	2,603	1,906	2,151	3,137	2,961
Redhill	2,946	2,793	2,301	2,211	1,933	2,018	2,913	2,782
Romford	3,413	3,071	2,596	2,210	2,094	2,104	3,738	3,697
Sheffield	2,941	2,278	2,188	1,990	1,763	2,058	2,425	2,411
Shrewsbury	3,008	2,579	2,238	2,198	1,996	2,018	2,692	2,787
Southampton	3,809	3,105	2,772	2,255	2,377	2,437	3,393	2,999
Southend	3,839	2,900	2,179	1,899	1,993	2,035	3,701	2,852
Staines	2,554	2,755	2,430	2,145	1,484	2,141	2,757	2,648
Stratford	3,000	2,216	2,205	2,573	2,370	1,774	2,836	3,499
Swansea	3,421	3,135	2,366	2,141	2,827	2,728	3,531	3,022
Taunton	2,997	2,440	2,261	2,343	2,234	2,256	3,040	3,390
Uxbridge	3,155	2,865	2,077	1,923	1,926	2,002	2,652	2,515
Washington	2,904	2,618	2,040	1,920	2,153	2,260	2,742	2,363
Wembley	3,093	2,866	2,369	2,108	2,101	2,108	2,848	3,145
West End	4,160	4,033	3,113	2,949	2,948	3,102	3,245	3,271
Westminster	2,414	2,423	2,054	1,967	1,592	1,522	2,039	2,089
Wigan	2,819	2,696	2,082	1,924	1,943	2,108	2,473	2,476
Woking	3,556	3,412	2,979	2,767	2,161	2,070	3,224	3,514
Wolverhampton	2,015	1,941	1,688	1,663	1,470	1,618	2,123	2,205

"Other Receipts"

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will, provide a table disaggregating the series "other receipts" published in table 2B.4 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1993-94" into its principal components together with a table indicating how these figures compare with the equivalent series in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1992-93".

Mr. Portillo: A detailed breakdown of "other receipts" for 1992-93 and 1993-94 can be found in the general government column of table 6.9 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" (FSBR). They comprise lines 6, 7, 10, 11, and 28 to 31. The 1992-93 figures can be directly compared with projections made in the same table in the 1992-93 FSBR. For the medium term, 1994-95 and beyond in the 1993-94 FSBR, 1993-94 and beyond in last year's FSBR, the figures are stylised projections.

Lloyd's Names

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the changes in tax treatment for Lloyd's invested premium, set out in his Budget, will have for names currently benefiting from capital gains tax indexation allowances under current arrangements.

Mr. Dorrell: Under my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's proposals gains and losses on assets held by Lloyd's names in a premiums trust fund will be brought within the computation of trading profits chargeable to income tax. Capital gains tax treatment, including the availability of indexation allowances, will therefore no longer apply.

Taxpayers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the numbers of additional income tax payers in 1993-94 as a result of freezing rates of personal allowances; and how much extra income tax will be raised as a result.

Mr. Dorrell: Compared with statutory indexation, the revenue yield from not changing personal allowances will be about £700 million in 1993-94, and about 300,000 more people will pay tax.

Gilt-edged Securities

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about purchases of gilt-edged securities by individuals.

Mr. Nelson: Over recent months, there has been an increase in interest among personal investors in finding out about the gilt market and the investment opportunities in gilts.

The Government have decided to respond to that interest in two ways.

First, the Bank of England will be issuing on 5 April a new booklet providing clear information for the personal investor about the gilt market and how it works.

Secondly, the Department for National Savings will be improving the service it offers to personal investors through the National Savings Stock Register (NSSR), with effect from 7 April. The upper limit on the amount that may be invested in any one existing stock which can be bought on any one day will go up from £10,000 to £25,000. This is the first increase in this limit for 10 years. The upper limit on the nominal amount of stock bought in a public offering which personal investors may ask to have registered on the NSSR will also go up from £10,000 to £25,000. The increase in this limit is the first for over five

years. The order to put these changes into effect was laid before the House on 18 March. And in future, DNS will arrange for all existing stocks to be available through its system.

The costs of producing the booklet will fall to the Treasury's 1993-94 vote (class XVII, vote 1). Parliamentary approval for this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for this vote. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure of £309,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund. The resulting increases in the Treasury's cash limit and gross running costs limit will be fully offset by a reduction in the Bank of England's cash limit and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Channon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the relocation of HM Customs and Excise headquarters work from the south-east to the north-west is proceeding to timetable; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: To date 350 Customs and Excise headquarters posts have been relocated on schedule to Liverpool and 270 to Manchester from London and Southend. But organisational changes, efficiency savings and market testing are significantly reducing the size of the Department's central operations and particularly its ability to absorb surplus staff in Southend. In addition, turnover of the Department's staff at Southend is at an historic low and the planned changes would therefore lead to considerable compulsory redundancy. The board of Customs and Excise has therefore reviewed its relocation programme. The board and I have decided to rephase the programme by creating in Liverpool some 300 more posts in the next phase rather than the 850 extra posts previously planned.

This rephasing not only represents best value for money for the taxpayer but also strikes a balance between the need for jobs both in Southend and Liverpool and the business needs of Customs and Excise. The position in Southend will, however, be reviewed in four years' time, in 1997, in the light of the economic situation and job prospects in both Southend and Liverpool.

I recognise that this decision will be disappointing for the people of Merseyside and for the many organisations which have worked with Customs and Excise to make a success of relocation. But I do not believe that it would have been acceptable to have continued with a relocation programme which would have created new jobs in Liverpool but which in the changed circumstances would have left some hundreds of people in Southend facing compulsory redundancy. Customs and Excise will still be a major employer on Merseyside with more than 1,000 staff and a major headquarters office.

National Insurance and Income Tax

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total revenue raised from *(a)* national insurance contributions and *(b)* income tax in each year from 1978-79 to 1996-97 in (i) cash prices and (ii) 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* Available information on receipts of income tax and national insurance contributions is as follows:

£ billion

	National Insurance contributions[1]		*Income Tax*	
	Current prices	*1978-79 prices*[2]	*Current prices*	*1978-79*
1978-79	10·1	10·1	18·7	18·7
1979-80	11·8	10·1	20·6	17·7
1980-81	14·0	10·1	24·3	17·6
1981-82	16·0	10·6	28·7	19·0
1982-83	18·9	11·7	30·4	18·7
1983-84	20·8	12·3	31·1	18·3
1984-85	22·3	12·5	32·5	18·2
1985-86	24·5	13·0	35·4	18·8
1986-87	26·5	13·7	38·5	19·8
1987-88	29·1	14·2	41·4	20·2
1988-89	32·4	14·8	43·4	19·8
1989-90	32·9	14·1	48·8	20·8
1990-91	35·0	13·8	55·3	21·9
1991-92	36·3	13·5	57·5	21·3
1992-93[3]	37·4	13·4	56·5	20·3
1993-94[3]	39·1	13·6	57·5	20·1
1994-95[3]	44	14¾	—	—
1995-96[3]	47	15¼	—	—
1996-97[3]	50	15¾	—	—

[1] Excluding national insurance surcharge.
[2] Using the GDP deflator at market prices.
[3] 1993-94 Financial Statement and Budget Report estimates or forecasts.

Households (Negative Equity)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of households with negative equity in each region in each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* There is considerable variation in estimates of the number of households with negative equity, reflecting the uncertainties involved in such calculations. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 23 February to my hon. Friend the member for Hazel Grove (Sir Tom Arnold) by the Minister for Housing and Planning at column *522*. The following table provides figures for the north and south calculated on the same basis, which excludes those who have increased their indebtedness since buying their house, and those who have since sold or had their house repossessed; it is based on the DOE house price index. It would not be possible to produce a more detailed regional breakdown without disproportionate cost.

The number of households with negative equity (thousand)

	1988Q4	*1989Q4*	*1990Q4*	*1991Q4*	*1992Q4*
North	—	—	0	20	100
South	—	20	190	320	930
Total	—	20	190	340	1,030

Note: The South is defined as Greater London, South East, East Anglia, South West, East and West Midlands. The North includes the rest of the United Kingdom.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sports Aid Foundation

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what support his Department is giving to the Sports Aid Foundation Charitable Trust in 1992-93.

Mr. Brooke: We have paid to the Sports Aid Foundation Charitable Trust grant of £17,000 for the current year in respect of its administration costs. This is a new service to be provided within class XII, vote 5 of my Department's estimates provision for 1992-93. The full amount of the grant will be met from savings made from other sub-heads within vote 5.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what offers in lieu of tax have been accepted or allocated since his last announcement on 26 March, *Official Report*, column *729*.

Mr. Brooke: Since my last announcement on 26 March, *Official Report*, column 729, I am pleased to inform the House of the acceptance of two offers in lieu of taxation. The offers consist of the Barrington archive together with a model gun ship which will satisfy £147,000 tax and a group of chattels from Nostell priory which will satisfy £30,820 tax.

The Nostell priory chattels will be allocated to the National Trust and will remain "in situ" at Nostell priory. This allocation is in accordance with the conditions on which the offer was made. No decision has yet been made on the allocation of the Barrington archive, or on the model gun ship.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa (Nuclear Devices)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government have on the nuclear devices produced by South Africa in the 1970s.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 29 March 1993 to the honourable Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) at column *46*.

UAE

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the British embassy in the United Arab Emirates made regarding the two men recently sentenced to have an arm and a leg amputated for theft.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Consul-General raised with the Fujairah authorities on 23 March the case of two men convicted of piracy and sentenced to have an arm and a leg amputated. He was informed that the case is going to appeal. A final decision on sentencing will be taken only then. While the sentences were passed in accordance with UAE federal criminal judicial procedure, the Government of the United Arab Emirates can be in no doubt as to our views on such punishments and on human rights generally.

Embassy Staff

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy in relation to the appointment to the staff of British embassies of individuals with experience in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Goodlad: We attach great importance to strengthening the diplomatic service's links with industry and to our programme of interchanges with the private sector. It is also our policy to recruit as locally engaged commercial officers business men with appropriate experience, including those from the manufacturing industry.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many retired civil servants of the Hong Kong Government were registered at the latest available date.

Mr. Goodlad: There are some 41,000 retired Hong Kong Government civil servants.

HEALTH

Information Technology

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the total bill to the national health service for computer systems including software in the last 10 years; what is the current projected budget for computers over the public expenditure planning period; and what is the nature and cost of each child surveillance computer system for each region in the last 10 years;

(2) what were the total amounts written off in respect of ineffective computer systems in each of the last three years per region.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure incurred by health authorities in England on computers and related costs became separately identifiable in their annual accounts from 1983-84. Figures for the financial years 1983-84 to 1991-92, which cover all relevant expenditure incurred by the health authorities in their management and direct provision of all hospital and community health services (HCHS), are shown in the table.

Comprehensive information on health authorities' projected expenditure on computers, on the costs incurred on child surveillance computer systems, and on any ineffective computer systems is not available centrally.

Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS)— Expenditure on computers and computing

	Revenue Purchase of hardware and operational software £000 (cash)	*Revenue Maintenance of hardware and software (including licensing fees)* £000 (cash)	*Revenue Contract Services* £000 (cash)	*Capital Purchase of hardware and operational software* £000 (cash)
1983-84	6,311	5,715	2,980	21,335
1984-85	9,658	7,469	4,750	35,523
1985-86	12,414	11,198	5,618	47,175
1986-87	16,347	15,365	9,041	65,025
1987-88	19,657	32,129	7,576	68,892

	Revenue Purchase of hardware and operational software £000 (cash)	Revenue Maintenance of hardware and software (including licensing fees) £000 (cash)	Revenue Contract Services £000 (cash)	Capital Purchase of hardware and operational software £000 (cash)
1988-89	26,603	28,893	8,800	62,465
1989-90	41,357	32,261	13,091	94,522
1990-91	61,538	44,216	28,809	119,233
1991-92	49,871	65,268	35,281	[1]31,710

[1] Main frame systems only. Excludes an element within a total of £103·5 million for office and information technology equipment. (Note 3 to the table refers).

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts (1983-84 to 1990-91) and annual financial returns (1991-92) of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

(b) 1991-92 annual financial returns of the first wave NHS trusts.

Notes:

1. HCHS covers all services directly managed or accounted for by the health authorities and NHS Trusts including hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.

2. Revenue "purchases" may include elements for rent and leasing. There is some discontinuity in the series of figures for "maintenance" and "contract services" as since 1987-88, the latter category is intended to include only expenditure incurred on contracts for data processing services.

3. The figures for 1991-92 (which are derived from annual financial returns rather than accounts) are provisional. Following the introduction of capital asset accounting and changes to the analyses provided in annual financial returns the figure for capital expenditure is not comparable to those for earlier years. It represents expenditure only on mainframe information technology (IT) systems and excludes additional expenditure on computers within a total of some £103·5 million for "office and IT equipment" and which is not separately identifiable centrally.

4. The table excludes the comparatively small costs incurred by family health services authorities and special health authorities providing central services to the National Health Service.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the strategy for implementing "The Health of the Nation" is going to take into account the needs of people from black and ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Sackville: The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" (Cm. 1986) and the supporting key area handbooks, copies of which are available in the Library, identify particular health needs of people from black and ethnic minorities and indicate that health authorities and others must concentrate efforts on such needs if the White Paper's targets are to be achieved. I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on 23 March at column *589*, which stated that we have set up a task force to examine and recommend action at all levels in the Department, and in the national health service to ensure the application of current best practice in the provision of health services for black and ethnic minorities.

Image Training

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the budget of the management training for women in the health service is to be spent on image training; how many women this involves; and at what levels in the health service.

Mr. Sackville: Individual positive image sessions are no longer available through the women in the national health service management development programme.

Prescription Charges

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on evidence which compares chronic conditions related to the pre-payment certificate scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: Prescription pre-payment certificates, which offer real savings to anyone who needs more than 14 prescribed items in a year, or more than five in a four-month period, are not linked to any medical conditions. They are available to anyone who is not entitled to free prescriptions on application, and payment of the required fee, to their local family health services authority.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which professional services within her Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: The citizens charter first report published Departments' plans for their initial market testing programmes covering the period to 30 September 1993. The Department's programme includes the following professional and related services:

—internal audit
—the Department of Health library service
—certain statistical support functions

The market testing process for these services has begun.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of money has been allocated in each of the financial years ended March 1991, 1992 and 1993 by Waltham Forest health authority for the treatment of patients requiring IVF; how many patients have been refused IVF because of insufficient funds on *(a)* primary cycle and *(b)* subsequent cycles; and what is the current waiting time from referral to primary treatment and from primary to subsequent treatment.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to Miss Delva Patman, chairman of Redbridge and Waltham Forest health authority, for details.

GP Fund Holders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library copies of letters and reports sent by the Audit Commission to her Department on fund holding in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: Formal audit reports covering matters of major concern, which are reports in the public interest (RIPI), are issued under section 20(3) of the 1990 National Health Service and Community Care Act and are public documents. No RIPIs have been issued concerning general practitioner fundholding in 1991-92. Management letters, summarising matters arising during the course of an audit are routinely sent to each family health services authority. These are not available centrally.

Paracetemol Overdoses

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the number of suicides and suicide attempts arising from overdoses of paracetemol in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available figures for the number of people who have been recorded as having committed suicide and where paracetemol is mentioned in the records is shown in table 1. Table 2 combines the information provided in table 1 with statistics on the number of people where paracetemol is mentioned in the records and where it was undetermined whether death was accidentally or purposely inflicted. Information on the number of people who have attempted suicide by use of paracetemol is not available centrally.

A recent article[1] published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, suggests that a significant number of the undetermined deaths are in fact suicides. A copy of this article is available in the Library.

[1]Charlton J, Kelly S, Evans B, Jenkins R, Wallis R, (1992). Trends in suicide deaths in England and Wales. Population Trends, 69 10-16.

Table 1

Numbers of recorded deaths from suicide where paracetamol is mentioned in the records. England and Wales, 1990, persons only

	Total
Paracetamol	101 (5[1])
Paracetamol Prothiaden	1
Paracetamol Salicylate (NOS)	1
Paracetamol Temazepam Tricyclic Anti Depressant (NOS)	1
Paracetamol Triazolam	1
Paracetamol Warfarin	1

Table 2

Numbers of recorded deaths from suicide and undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted where paracetamol is mentioned in the records. England and Wales, 1990, persons only

	Total
Paracetamol	185 (13[1])
Paracetamol Propoxyphene	5 (1[1])
Paracetamol Propranolol	1
Paracetamol Prothiaden	1
Paracetamol Salicylate (NOS)	5 (1[1])
Paracetamol Temazepam Tricyclic Anti Depressant (NOS)	1
Paracetamol Triazolam	1
Paracetamol Warfarin	1
Paracetamol Verapamil	1

[1] Number of deaths with mention of alcohol.
NOS Not otherwise stated.

The inclusion of a substance in this list does not imply that it is necessarily toxic. Where two or more substances are mentioned together the contribution, if any, of each to the death is unknown; even where one substance is listed alone there may well be other factors with an important bearing on the death.

Drug Prescribing

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's timetable for introducing the new selected list regulations to cover 10 additional therapeutic categories of NHS medicines; and what parliamentary procedures will be applicable for debating the new regulations before they are enacted.

Dr. Mawhinney: Orders to amend the list of drugs which cannot be prescribed under the national health service are made under the negative resolution procedure. They are normally made twice a year. We expect the next order to be made before the summer recess.

Blindness

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the incidence of blindness caused by unsatisfactory contact lenses; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Three per cent. of the population in the United Kingdom use contact lenses. There are no available figures to indicate that using contact lenses may cause blindness. There are indications that although the risk is low, contact lens wearers do have an enhanced exposure to factors that can result in ocular infection and keratitis.

The Department, in co-operation with the professional bodies concerned, is producing information documents to help wearers of contact lenses and eye care practitioners.

Mental Health Review Tribunals

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how members of mental health review tribunals are appointed; what training they are given; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Mental Health Act 1983 provides for the appointment of legal, medical and lay members of mental health review tribunals (MHRTs) by the Lord Chancellor, after consultation with the Secretary of State for Health in respect of medical and lay members. Candidates are appointed on the basis of their professional background, qualifications and other relevant experience. Training includes courses provided by the Judicial Studies Board in tribunal practice generally; MHRT induction training and peer conferences provided under the auspices of regional MHRT chairmen; and observation of hearings. All training takes account of the detailed rules of procedure laid down in the MHRT Rules 1983, made under the 1983 Act by the Lord Chancellor.

Medicines

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the proposed new regulations to limit the number of medicines available to NHS patients in 10 new therapeutic categories will apply to hospital doctors.

Dr. Mawhinney: The regulations giving effect to the selected list scheme apply to prescriptions issued by hospital doctors for dispensing in community pharmacies, but not to prescriptions dispensed in hospital pharmacies.

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from patient, consumer and medical groups in respect of the proposal to extend the NHS limited list regulations to 10 new therapeutic categories; and if she will place copies of her replies in the Library.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received and replied to a number of such representations. It is for the parties concerned to decide whether such correspondence should be made public.

Census Data

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current position on the statement of policies governing the confidentiality and security of personal data held within the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Registrar General for England and Wales and I attach the greatest importance to maintaining the confidentiality and security of personal data about members of the public held within the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). A comprehensive review of how this could best be achieved was completed in 1992. A draft statement of policies was produced, and a copy was placed in the Library. The Registrar General has sought the views of a range of outside bodies before formally adopting the statement. In particular the Data Protection Registrar has commented that it serves to confirm the ongoing OPCS commitment to maintain high standards in the handling of information about individuals. The consultation process is now complete, with the statement reciving general support. The statement as adopted has been published today, and a copy placed in the Library.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her response to the proposals made by the South West Thames regional health authority for improved accountability arrangements for the London Ambulance Service; and if she will make the proposals public.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following publication of the independent Inquiry into the operation of the computer aided dispatch system of the London ambulance service (LAS), I asked the South West Thames regional health authority chairman, Professor Marian Hicks, urgently to draw up proposals to strengthen lines of management accountability for the LAS. I have decided to accept the proposals she has put to me.

Under the new arrangements, the LAS board will be replaced by direct managerial accountability to the regional health authority. The LAS chief executive will be directly answerable to the regional health authority for all aspects of the performance and management of the LAS. Through the existing lines of national health service accountability the regional health authority will report to me. I shall expect to be kept in close touch with developments and have asked the authority to publish a report in the autumn on progress in implementing the recommendations of the independent inquiry into the LAS.

A special sub-committee of the regional health authority is to be established to assist in the oversight of LAS performance. The sub-committee will have available to it the expertise of a small group of external specialists who will be appointed to advise the LAS on matters such as information technology. These advisers will have direct access to the regional chairman in the event of their having any concerns they believe are not being addressed by the line management system.

The LAS will also be open to greater public scrutiny. Its performance will be regularly considered in the public meetings of the regional health authority and it will publish an annual report. Regular performance reports will also be made available to Members, community health councils and other interested public bodies.

I am satisfied that these arrangements will provide an effective framework for accounting to the public for the performance of the LAS. Details of the arrangements are being placed today in the Library.

Archives (Microfiche)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to place information regarding births, marriages and deaths on microfiche and make it available at archive houses; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: All but the more recent indexes held in the public search room of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are already available in microfiche form in many local libraries and record offices.

The Government White Paper, "Registration: proposals for change" (Cm 939) published in 1990, recommends that in England and Wales the civil registration records older than 75 years should be opened to public scrutiny. These records are held in hardcopy form and on microfilm. The Government proposed in the White Paper that the provision of a central record library should be offered as a contract to those who might wish to run it outside government, either as a non profit-making trust or a commercial concern. A decision on whether the microfilm should be converted to microfiche and/or other media would have to await the outcome of negotiations with interested bodies. Open public access to the information contained in these records requires legislative change which the Government will introduce when a suitable opportunity occurs.

Dentistry

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are proposed for those who are unable to obtain a national health service dentistry service to be recompensed for the additional costs of treatment and travel involved in obtaining alternative dental treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no need for any patient to seek alternatives to national health service dentistry. Patients experiencing any difficulty in obtaining NHS dental treatment should contact their local family health services authority, which will be able to help.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Charity Commission over the refurbishment of offices at the Royal Marsden hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Charity Commission has been in contact with my officials concerning the refurbishing of the reception area at the Royal Marsden hospital.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning in the home have occured in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The information is given in the table.

Deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning in the home 1980-1990 England and Wales

ICD Codes	*1980*	*[1]1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
E868·0	5	4	2	8	2	5	5	2	3	0	8
E868·1	3	2	1	0	2	4	11	8	9	5	5
E868·3	34	23	30	36	16	23	32	23	22	10	11
E868·8	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	1
E868·9	7	41	18	0	4	2	7	3	0	3	5
E982·1	9	6	11	3	4	3	3	2	7	9	5
Total	60	76	62	49	28	37	58	38	42	29	35

[1]The data for 1981 were affected by Industrial action by registration officers.
Note: Excludes deaths from motor vehicle exhaust.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the current membership and outline the constitution of the veterinary medicines directorate.

Mr. Soames: Membership of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, together with its aims and objectives, is set out in the VMD annual report and accounts for 1991-92, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the current level of costs associated with submitting an application by a manufacturer for a licence from the veterinary medicines directorate for a product licence.

Mr. Soames: The level of costs associated with submitting an application for a veterinary medicine product licence will vary considerably, dependent on the target species, active ingredient, indications for use, and type of application. In some cases, the simplified licensing procedure introduced in 1990 may be appropriate. As a consequence, no information is held centrally on such costs. Ultimately, it is for the individual pharmaceutical company to decide what investment may be needed to meet the licensing requirements of safety, quality and efficacy, and whether that can be justified bearing in mind the likely return from the market.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has concerning the number of applications for a veterinary medicine product licence which have been considered in total by the veterinary medicines directorate in connection with the implementation of the European directive on these matters; how many of those applications were accepted; how many were withdrawn; and how many were declined;

(2) what information he has concerning the number of veterinary medicinal products which were formerly available in the United Kingdom but for which manufacturers have not applied for a product licence from the veterinary medicines directorate either on the grounds of the cost of making such an application, or upon other grounds.

Mr. Soames: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the EC wide review of pharmaceutical veterinary product licences issued before 1984, which is currently being undertaken in the United Kingdom in accordance with directive 81/851/EEC. At 2 March 1993, 2,731 products had been called for review. Of these, 504 reviewed licences have been issued, 506 applications are still under assessment, and 1,721 licences have been withdrawn or expired at companies request. The grounds for decisions either to apply for, or to withdraw, licences are a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that the interests of the relevant industries and professions are fully represented among the membership of the veterinary medicines directorate.

Mr. Soames: The veterinary medicines directorate holds regular meetings with representatives of consumer organisations, the National Office of Animal Health, the British Veterinary Association, and other representative organisations and professional bodies to ensure that their views are fully represented.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total cost of the veterinary medicines directorate in each year since its establishment; and what percentage of these costs have been raised by fees from industry in each of those years.

Mr. Soames: The veterinary medicines directorate (VMD) was established on 3 April 1989, and as a next steps agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 2 April 1990. The total annual costs of the VMD, and the percentage raised by licence fees, have been as follows:

	£'000	Per cent. raised by licence fees
1989-90	2,300	65
1990-91	3,100	68
1991-92	3,700	65
1992-93[1]	3,800	63

[1]Forecast.

Medicinal Products

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that British farmers and veterinary surgeons continue to have access to the full range of medicinal products which are available in the United Kingdom and in other member countries of the European Community.

Mr. Soames: Community law currently requires that no medicinal product may be marketed in a member state, unless there is a market authorisation issued in that member state. In the United Kingdom that means a United Kingdom product licence. Subject to that requirement, the licensing authority will continue to take advantage of any developments in the EC arrangements for the control of veterinary medicines, intended to make it easier for applicants to obtain licences to market products not previously available in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those veterinary medicinal products of which he is aware for which a licence has been given by the French authorities, but for which a licence has been either declined, or not sought in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: I understand that the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH) has identified approximately 70 veterinary medicinal products available in other member states but not licensed in the United Kingdom. For reasons of commercial sensitivity, however, NOAH has felt unable to identify the individual products concerned so that the circumstances can be explored. I regret therefore that such a list cannot be compiled, although I remain willing to look into any specific examples of products licensed in one member state but not in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress which has been made since 1981 in implementing the European requirement for all veterinary medicinal products to be licensed.

Mr. Soames: It has been a requirement of United Kingdom law since 1972 that all veterinary medicinal products must be licensed before they can be marketed.

VMD

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the National Office of Animal Health about alternative ways of meeting the costs of the veterinary medicines directorate.

Mr. Soames: I regularly receive representations from the National Office of Animal Health about alternative ways of meeting the licensing costs of the veterinary medicines directorate. The latest have been in response to a consultation letter on options for 1993-94 fee levels issued in December 1992. As with previous representations these are being given full and careful consideration. I hope to announce my decision shortly.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets he has set for the veterinary medicines directorate in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The chief executive of the veterinary medicines directorate (VMD) has submitted his proposals to me and I have agreed that the VMD should be set the following performance targets for 1993-94:

—full cost recovery for the three business activities of licensing, policy work and residues monitoring;
—70 per cent. of new licence applications to be issued within 120 clock days; 95 per cent. within 200 days;
—an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.

These are challenging targets, given the increased volumes being forecast for the VMD's business. They will build on the improvements already made in the efficiency and quality of service provided by the directorate since its establishment as a next steps agency, and for which I commend the chief executive and his staff. In addition, I have agreed the VMD's corporate plan for 1993-94–1995-96, and copies are being placed in the Library of the House and the Public Information Office.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Curry: Recruits to the senior grades as to any grade in the civil service are selected on merit, on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including:

(a) extending links with institutions of higher education;
(b) equal opportunities training for those involved in selection;

and

(c) using validated selection procedures.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department completed its survey of the ethnic origin of staff in 1987 and keeps this up to date with information on new staff and leavers. Some 96 per cent. of staff have volunteered information on their ethnic origin. The Department's personnel records include details of the number of men and women and there is, therefore, no need to undertake particular surveys on the number of women employed. The Department is fully committed to the programmes for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for people of ethnic minority origin and women.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Curry: The information for MAFF and its executive agencies is as follows:

Grade equivalent	*Women*		*From Ethnic Minorities*		*Registered Disabled People*	
	Number	*Per cent. of total staff*	*Number of respondents to questionnaire*	*Per cent. total of all respondents to questionnaire*	*Number*	*Per cent. of total staff*
1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	1	14·3	—	—	1	14·3
3	1	4·2	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	9	7·8	1	0·9	1	0·9
6	13	7·9	1	0·6	1	0·6
7	134	14·5	13	1·5	2	0·2
All staff	4,519	46·1	416	4·4	138·5	1·4

Badger Setts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of badger setts, by county, closed or otherwise, seriously interfered with by or under licence from his Department's officials in each month from October 1991.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on Tuesday 30 March 1993.

Milk Development Council

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to create a milk development council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government will consider any proposals from the milk industry for the establishment of a development council. Ministers would decide whether to make an order establishing such a development council in accordance with the provisions of the Industrial Organisation and Development Act 1947. This requires them, among other things, to be satisfied that this is desired by a substantial number of persons engaged in the industry.

The Agriculture Bill would enable an agricultural development council to collect a levy through intermediaries. This provision is designed to facilitate the efficient operation of such a council. The industry may, therefore, wish to consider making proposals after the enactment of the Bill.

Dairy Crest

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to change the status of Dairy Crest to a private limited company; if he will allow it to have access to outside equity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Dairy Crest Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of the England and Wales milk marketing board. The Agriculture Bill would enable the board to apply to Ministers for approval of formal proposals for the future ownership of its assets. The board currently intends that Dairy Crest should be established as an independent company listed on the stock exchange. This would enable it to raise equity capital.

Integrated Administration and Control System

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who will have access to the information stored in the computer database which is to be set up under the integrated administration and control system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Access to the information held on the IACS computer database will be restricted to officials who need to have access. All officials with access to the information will be bound by the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984. If external contractors were to be used, they would be bound by the normal rules of confidentiality.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will accept integrated administration and control system forms submitted by farmers where they have calculated their land size in acres rather than hectares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The explanatory booklet explains clearly that farmers are required to submit details of areas in hectares and not in acres. If a farmer nevertheless gives the figures in acres, we shall be able to accept the application only if we are satisfied that it meets the rules relating to genuine errors referred to in the explanatory booklet.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what funds he will make available to help farmers who incur costs when having to complete the integrated administration and control system forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: No funds are available for this purpose. The costs incurred in completing the IACS forms and supplying supporting information will, for most farmers, represent a small proportion of the payments for which they are applying. They are a normal expense of the farm business.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what circumstances farmers will be allowed extensions to the deadline for completing their integrated administration and control system forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The EC regulations do not include provision for any extensions to the deadline of 15 May for the receipt of IACS applications. The rules provide that,

except in cases of force majeure, farmers whose applications are received after the deadline will lose 1 per cent. of the aid to which they would otherwise be entitled for each working day that the application is late. However, if the application is received 20 or more calendar days after the closing date, no aid will be payable under the affected schemes.

Central Science Laboratory

Dr Twinn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets he has set for the central science laboratory in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The efficiency of the agency will continue to be judged primarily through cost recovery. Additional performance measures relating to the objectives of the agency will also be used to measure operating efficiency and quality of service.

The financial targets for the central science laboratory for 1993-94 will be:

100 per cent. cost recovery of full costs;
an overall efficiency gain of 2·5 per cent;
a reduction of 5 per cent. in real term of representation unit costs for services;

The targets for delivery of services by the central science laboratory will be:

at least 90 per cent. of work completed to time and within budget;
at least 95 per cent. of contracts delivered to the customer's satisfaction;

The central science laboratory will continue to implement during 1993-94 arrangements for the independent assessment of the quality of the scientific work and publications. The measures of performance for the agency are set out in the central science laboratory framework document.

Central Veterinary Laboratory

Mr. Bates: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets he has set for the central veterinary laboratory in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The chief executive of the central veterinary laboratory has submitted his proposals to me and I have agreed that the laboratory should be set the following strategic performance target for 1993-94:

Financial Performance—full cost recovery for all CVL services
Efficiency—an overall efficiency gain of 2·5 per cent.
Service Delivery—80 per cent. of ROAME R & D milestones achieved
Service Quality—achievement of a satisfactory report from a Visiting Group
—achievement of laboratory accreditations of the Quality Control Unit

These are demanding targets which challenge the laboratory to build on its achievements to date. I commend the chief executive and his staff for the improvements they have already made and wish them well in their endeavours in 1993-94.

Pesticides Safety Division

Mr. Faber: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made towards establishing the pesticides safety division as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to confirm that pesticides safety division is to be established as an executive agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 1 April 1993, when it will become the pesticides safety directorate.

I have set the directorate the following targets for 1993-94, relating to financial performance, efficiency and the delivery of pesticide approval services.

The financial and efficiency targets will be:

100 per cent. recovery of full costs; and
an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.

The targets for delivery of pesticide approval services will be:

Type of approval	*Applications completed*	*Maximum processing time (working days)*
Technical secretariat stream		
Normal	400	450
Administrative fast	250	20
Fast	370	125
Experimental permits	70	200
Off label (emergency)	150	60
Rapid	75	125
Upgrade	100	—
Committee stream		
Sift	21	120
Active ingredient	15	250-290

For 1993-94, the targets for maximum processing time will apply to 75 per cent. of the applications received in the year. This percentage is planned to increase progressively in future years.

In addition, the scientific quality of the directorate's work on the evaluation of pesticides will be monitored by the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

A copy of the directorate's framework document is being placed in the Library of the House.

Food Science Laboratories

Mr. Faber: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in his review of the status of the laboratories dealing with food science.

Mr. Gummer: I have concluded that it would be right for the food science laboratory, Norwich and the Torry research station, Aberdeen to achieve agency status. The best and most efficient mechanism is to merge both laboratories with the existing central science laboratory agency with effect from 1 April 1994. I intend to proceed accordingly. There are no plans to move the laboratories at Norwich and Aberdeen from their present locations. Both will continue to support the food safety work of the Department.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is able to report on the outcome of the independent review of slaughterhouses, and of the recent consultations on the Government's proposals to limit meat inspection charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to announce three measures to ensure that veterinary supervision of slaughterhouses is

provided in a manner which will enable small slaughterhouses to meet proper hygiene requirements without placing unnecessary burdens on them.

I am determined that cost-effective, consistent and proportionate arrangements for veterinary supervision should be put in place so that public health is protected and the whole industry given the best chance to provide an efficient and competitive service.

There has been considerable concern about the cost of veterinary supervision which has been widely quoted at sums of £40 or more per hour. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary (Commons) in my Department has been consulting closely with the British Veterinary Association about the fees being charged by veterinary surgeons. The House will be interested in the results of a survey of veterinary costs recently carried out by the Association. This survey attracted responses covering over 400 official veterinary surgeons working in more than 600 plants in over 200 local authority districts. The average hourly rate being charged was £25·70. This yardstick will ensure that industry and local authorities can more easily check that they are obtaining a cost-effective service.

Up to now, the arrangements for supervising hygiene in slaughterhouses have been carried out by local authorities. It is obviously important that they should provide this service at a reasonable cost. In small slaughterhouses in particular it is an appreciable component of the overheads. We issued proposals on these costs for consultation on 14 January. Although in most cases inspection services are being provided within reasonable limits, the Government are concerned to protect the interests of slaughterhouses where charges have been unnecessarily high. As a result we are introducing a strict upper limit of £40 for up to four livestock units and £6.30 per livestock unit thereafter. Where the cost of existing or prospective arrangements would exceed the limit, local authorities will have the option of renegotiating contracts with veterinary practitioners. They will no doubt find the British Veterinary Association survey useful in this.

The third measure I am announcing today will enable small slaughterhouses to make use of local large-animal practitioners to provide the veterinary supervision service. Already, the Government have issued guidance to enable large-animal practitioners to carry out ante-mortem inspection work. We will shortly issue additional guidance to help them carry out the full veterinary supervision of low throughput slaughterhouses. Most small abattoirs have at least one such veterinary practice within five miles. Slaughterhouses will be able to seek a service from practitioners who are willing to provide it, and this alternative ought to ensure cost-effective and competitive provision. Above all, a great deal of expensive waiting and travelling time will be avoided. In the rare event that a local authority is not prepared to sanction such an arrangement, there can be a direct appeal to the Minister.

The Government will shortly consult on proposals on monitoring hygiene standards in meat plants. The proposed monitoring system is intended to assist local authorities in ensuring that the level of veterinary supervision is proportionate to the risk arising at the individual premises, so that plants operating to high standards can benefit from lower levels of supervision.

I have also received the report I commissioned from two independent experts, Dr. Johnston and Mr. Spurr, on hygiene and structural standards in slaughterhouses. This has been placed in the Library and I commend it to the House. The authors concluded that overall the improvements being required by the state veterinary service do not go beyond what is necessary to rectify structure-related hygiene problems. I shall continue to ensure that we do not ask anything more of the industry than is essential to achieve this end. I shall also seek to carry forward the other recommendations of the Johnston/Spurr report.

Ministers are taking the closest possible personal interest in the way these regulations are enforced. We are very conscious of the importance of slaughterhouses to the local economy of the countryside. As I have made clear on many occasions, there is no question of any slaughterhouse being refused a licence under the new regulations without a personal decision by myself or my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

We recognise that the process of implementing these regulations has been a difficult one for the industry and enforcement authorities. In applying them, we will continue to seek practical solutions to problems and to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on businesses. In this context as in all areas of food law, the Government are committed to ensuring that the requirements imposed by the legislation are proportionate to the risk involved. We propose where necessary to continue discussions between slaughterhouse operators, local authorities, veterinary surgeons and meat inspectors with a view to achieving high standards and harmonious working relationships during the transition to the proposed national meat hygiene service.

Farmers (Suicides)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from Wales on the levels of suicides among farmers and their families.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply. None.

EMPLOYMENT

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in her Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. McLoughlin: The numbers and percentages of women and ethnic minority officers in grades 1 to 7 and overall in the Department at 1 April 1992 are set out in the tables. Information on disabled people cannot be provided in the form requested, but overall numbers were 2,066 registered disabled people, or 3·4 per cent., at 1 July 1992.

Table 1
Women in the Employment Department Group (Grades 1 to 7) at 1 April 1992

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grade 1	0	0
Grade 2	1	20·0
Grade 3	2	7·1
Grade 4	0	0
Grade 5	22	15·6
Grade 6	31	13·4
Grade 7	165	15·6

The Department employed 41,555 women who comprised 66·5 per cent. of the total staff.

Table 2
Ethnic minority staff in the Employment Department Group (Grades 1 to 7) at 1 April 1992

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grade 1	0	0
Grade 2	0	0
Grade 3	0	0
Grade 4	0	0
Grade 5	0	0
Grade 6	0	0
Grade 7	9	0·9

The Department employed 3,607 staff from the ethnic minorities who comprised 6·4 per cent. of respondents to the ethnic origin survey.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at her Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: Recruits to the senior grades, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the Civil Service Commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including:

extending links with institutions of higher education;
equal opportunities training for those involved in selection;
using validated selection procedures.

Additionally, the Department:

has developed and run pre-recruitment training for ethnic minority candidates to its Management Trainee Scheme;
was one of the first employers to join the Opportunity 2000 campaign;
has signed up to the 15 per cent. benchmark figure for the proportion of women holding posts in the Senior Open Structure by 2000.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when her Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The survey of the ethnic origin of staff which took place in 1986 is continually updated to take account of those entering and leaving the Department. No survey for women is needed as the gender of employees is identified in staff records.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average number of unemployed in each travel-to-work area in Gloucestershire in each year since 1979; and what percentage of the work force this represented.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is available from 1983 and can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Travel-to-work-areas do not correspond exactly to county boundaries. Gloucestershire is made up of the TTWAs of Gloucester, Stroud, Cirencester plus parts of Cheltenham, Evesham, Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye, Malvern and Ledbury and Swindon.

Miners' Redundancy Payments

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she plans to start the £75 million package of additional assistance for redundant miners announced in October 1992.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Contingency plans drawn up by TECs for additional assistance for redundant mineworkers and others will be implemented if we reach a position where two thirds of the work force employed at the pit in October 1992 have left.

This arrangement will apply to collieries on which British Coal is already consulting about closure and to collieries announced as being put on a care and maintenance basis. This will also apply to two collieries which are remaining open, but making substantial redundancies for which contingency plans were originally drawn up and to the colliery which will be put under development.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what public expenditure cover will be made available in 1993-94 for European regional development fund projects relating to her responsibilities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This Department will be providing public expenditure cover in 1993-94 for applications for European regional development fund support in respect of the Department's responsibilities. The amount of cover necessary is estimated to be £4 million in 1993-94.

Restart

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole how many unemployed people were referred to Restart courses by Employment Service counsellors *(a)* between April 1991 and March 1992 and *(b)* from April 1992 to the latest available date, showing for each period how many of them were unemployed for over two years, how many attended and completed the course, what were the outcomes of the participants and how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the Restart course; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his answer, 12 March 1993, Official Report, col 747-48]:* The chief executive has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about Restart Courses. These are matters which fall within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately, due to an administrative error, our reply of 12 March did not include the figures about Restart courses. This reply now contains the tables; please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

As you will know from our previous correspondence, Restart Courses are short courses aimed at helping people

who are having the most difficulty returning to work. They are not an alternative to regular job search or other employment or training programmes. Essentially they provide people with the opportunity to explore all the options open to them and give them confidence to take the next step back to work.

Since 1990, people who have been unemployed for 2 years or more who refuse or fail to take up a place on an Employment Department employment or training programme at their Restart interview, are asked to attend a Restart Course.

As your question has raised a number of specific points, I am setting out the information you have asked for in the four tables attached. Tables 1 and 2 deal with all Restart Course attenders, and tables 3 and 4 refer to those covered by the requirement to attend. As explained in previous replies, we collect at a Regional level the number of people who are referred to the course who are also unemployed for 2 years or more. We have not, however, felt it necessary to keep similar figures for all those referred. The Benefits Agency (BA) make the decision on whether an individual's benefit should be reduced for failure to attend or complete the course. Their figures are compiled by BA Districts which have different boundaries to our own Regions. To avoid confusion, I have given the national figure only.

I hope that this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Table 1
All restart course attenders
April 1991 to March 1992

	Northern	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
1. People referred to Restart courses	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
2. Starters	12,807	14,631	9,591	21,358	6,608	6,929	15,489	26,239	20,188	133,840
3. Total completers	12,084	13,492	8,439	19,046	5,744	6,166	13,226	24,017	18,208	120,422
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	2,519	3,357	2,529	3,838	1,080	1,612	3,273	5,133	9,633	32,974
Employment training	1,079	1,433	1,081	3,747	927	1,124	3,237	3,423	1,921	17,972
Jobclub	971	937	995	3,602	772	1,007	1,517	2,752	1,126	13,679
Other employment, training and related opportunities	7,545	7,745	5,157	10,755	3,043	3,107	6,057	12,065	7,509	62,983
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[1]	10,636	11,028	7,537	16,943	4,782	5,175	11,805	20,648	16,177	104,731

N/a—Not available.

[1] Some people will be referred to more than one option.

Table 2
All restart course attenders
April 1992 to December 1992

	Northern	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*Total*
1. People referred to Restart courses	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
2. Starters	6,430	8,631	7,085	20,903	5,150	4,556	10,850	15,175	8,537	87,317
3. Total completers	6,031	7,871	6,346	18,605	4,551	4,050	9,487	13,639	7,518	78,098
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	1,944	2,127	1,901	3,680	861	818	2,482	2,791	4,643	21,247
Employment training	659	1,095	930	3,449	654	833	2,333	2,156	795	12,904
Jobclub	560	741	803	2,823	508	623	891	1,455	464	8,868
Other employment, training and related opportunities	3,535	5,705	4,923	13,878	2,981	2,720	4,695	8,141	3,925	50,503
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[1]	5,493	7,118	5,812	16,829	3,699	3,645	8,538	12,212	6,860	70,206

N/a—Not available.

[1] Some people will be referred to more than one option.

Table 3
Restart course attenders unemployed for two years or more
April 1991 to March 1992

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands and Eastern	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
1. People referred to Restart courses	17,768	21,950	10,218	24,367	6,487	7,589	17,240	41,141	34,078	180,838
2. Starters	11,526	12,989	6,587	13,540	4,011	4,760	10,011	23,243	18,395	105,062
3. Total completers	10,915	12,030	5,765	12,100	3,508	4,287	8,616	21,354	16,688	95,263
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	2,248	2,837	1,762	2,324	553	1,088	2,079	4,443	8,919	26,253
Employment training	910	1,236	622	2,139	416	624	1,794	2,940	1,659	12,340
Jobclub	859	799	545	1,997	249	607	772	2,402	949	9,179
Other employment, training and related opportunities	6,811	7,011	3,524	6,675	1,483	2,140	3,911	9,821	6,754	48,130
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[1]	9,561	9,725	5,035	10,578	2,787	3,449	7,584	18,317	14,815	81,851
5. People for whom a reduction in Income Support was made by Benefits Agency	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	3,804

[1] Some people will be referred to more than one option.
[2] Not available by Employment Service region.

Table 4
Restart course attenders unemployed for two years or more
April 1992 to December 1992

	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands and Eastern	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
1. People referred to Restart courses	9,285	12,463	8,606	26,748	5,603	6,084	10,848	24,326	15,649	119,612
2. Starters	5,804	7,213	4,708	14,567	3,396	3,164	6,774	12,770	7,297	65,693
3. Total completers	5,427	6,560	4,253	13,098	2,994	2,781	5,962	11,481	6,481	59,037
Completers who agreed to follow up:										
Jobs	1,723	1,781	1,305	2,583	585	454	1,472	2,290	4,082	16,275
Employment training	579	894	606	2,328	334	499	1,316	1,736	624	8,916
Jobclub	511	548	452	1,702	265	345	438	1,211	323	5,795
Other employment, training and related opportunities	3,188	4,867	3,181	9,622	1,815	1,974	2,854	6,813	3,329	37,643
4. Total number of people with an outcome to follow up[1]	4,947	5,919	3,880	11,846	2,318	2,416	5,249	10,279	5,929	52,783
5. People for whom a reduction in Income Support was made by the Benefits Agency	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	3,098

[1] Some people will be referred to more than one option.
[2] Not available by Employment Service region.

Health and Safety

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the successful prosecutions undertaken at the Crown court for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 during 1992 and in 1993 to the most recent practicable date together with the sentences imposed.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his reply, 5 February 1993]:* I regret that in my original reply the table of prosecutions was incomplete. The revised table is as follows:

Successful prosecution action taken by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectorates in the Crown court
1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992

Company	Crown court	Date of hearing	Sentence £
Ashby Demolition[1]	Knightsbridge	2 January 1992	7,500
St. Regis Paper Co.	Newport	2 January 1992	2,000
Lye Spencer Steel Services	Newport	31 January 1992	20,000
Senior Bigwood Ltd.	Newport	31 January 1992	10,000

Company	*Crown court*	*Date of hearing*	*Sentence* £
Pro Footwear	Burnley	5 February 1992	[2]700
Sansoms (Newport) Ltd.[1]	Newport	6 February 1992	2,500
Michael Poulter	Portsmouth	24 February 1992	[3]C/d
D. Short Ltd.	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	26 February 1992	9,000
Leeds City Council	Leeds	28 February 1992	15,000
British Gas	Liverpool	3 March 1992	100,000
Caird Environment Ltd.[1]	Birmingham	23 March 1992	50,000
Fletchers Bakeries Ltd.[1]	Sheffield	25 March 1992	10,000

[1] Case given in origin reply.
[2] Case heard in Magistrate's court, company appealed against sentence to the Crown court.
[3] Conditional discharge.

In my original reply I also undertook to make available information covering the period 1 April 1992 to 31 January 1993 once it had been checked for accuracy. This information is set out in the following table. The data should still be regarded as provisional as they include cases referred to the Crown court on appeal.

Successful prosecution action taken by Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectorates in the Crown court 1 April 1992 to 31 January 1993

Company	*Crown court*	*Date of hearing*	*Sentence* £
Paul Anthony Rooney	Wolverhampton	3 April 1992	4,000
Lyons Bakery	Sheffield	27 April 1992	10,000
Midlands Petfood Canners Ltd.	Northampton	27 April 1992	10,000
Balmoral Group	Sheffield	27 April 1992	10,000
Tarmac Construction	Maidstone	27 April 1992	18,000
Taylor Woodrow	Maidstone	27 April 1992	18,000
Wimpey Construction (UK) Ltd.	Maidstone	27 April 1992	18,000
Balfour Beattie	Maidstone	27 April 1992	18,000
Costain	Maidstone	27 April 1992	18,000
Shell UK Oils Ltd.	Chelmsford	14 May 1992	100,000
A. S. Dunn	Doncaster	19 May 1992	[1]750
Adrian William Bull	Bristol	16 June 1992	300
Lionel Whitnell t/a Whitnell Plan	St. Albans	6 July 1992	30,000
Eugena Ltd.	Knightsbridge	13 July 1992	[2]1,000
MWH Leisure Ltd.	Lewes	24 July 1992	40,000
Barris Fire Protection Ltd.	Kensington	12 August 1992	8,000
Chapmans Chalk Supplies Ltd.	Lewes	18 August 1992	[3]10,000
Mr. G. F. Thompson	Winchester	18 August 1992	5,000
D. J. and S. J. Hutchinson	Teeside	21 August 1992	500
Mr. Stanley Davis	Knightsbridge	28 August 1992	200
Courtaulds Ltd.	Bolton	11 September 1992	5,000
Mr. G. I. Gardner	Haverford West	28 September 1992	150 hours community service
Michael Kendray	Carlisle	28 September 1992	7,000
Bank of England	Chelmsford	9 October 1992	5,000
Courtaulds Fibres Ltd.	Grimsby	23 October 1992	100,000
Deborah Grayson Scaffolding	Wolverhampton	26 October 1992	12,000
Hertz Equipment Rental (UK)	Wolverhampton	26 October 1992	12,000
A. M. Marks and Co. Ltd.	Leeds	6 November 1992	7,600
P. Colohan and Co. Ltd.	Kingston	6 November 1992	2,500
F. J. Sloan and Co. Ltd.	Kingston	6 November 1992	1,100
Profelt	Northampton	13 November 1992	3,000
Gerry Jones Transport	Hereford	20 November 1992	[2]1,000
McEdward Franklin	Inner London	11 December 1992	2,500
Lodge Sturtevant Ltd.	Chelmsford	5 January 1993	21,000
Michael Stephen Grove	Bradford	13 January 1993	2,000
Mowlem Civil Engineering Ltd.	Manchester	19 January 1993	10,000
Sedgely Construction Co. Ltd.	Manchester	19 January 1993	2,000
W. Reidy and Son. Ltd.	Manchester	25 January 1993	40,000
Allied Colloids plc	Bradford	29 January 1993	100,000
T. and S. Rix Ltd.	Hull	29 January 1993	4,000

[1] £750, plus a six month prison sentence suspended for two years.
[2] Cases heard in the Magistrate's court but where the company appealed against sentence to the Crown court.
[3] Mr. Chapman was also disqualified for two years under the Companies Act from working as a director. He has appealed against the sentence.

WALES

Hepatitis B

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of recall for hepatitis B screening of patients treated by the surgeon in Wrexham, both at his current and previous hospitals of employment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The estimated cost to date of screening these patients is of the order of £27,000.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Welsh Development Agency factory floorspace is currently not in productive use.

Mr. David Hunt: At the end of February 1993, 15·7 per cent. of the agency's property portfolio was vacant and available for letting.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the percentage of unused lettable floorspace in Welsh Development Agency factories for every year since 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is published in the Welsh Office departmental reports Cmnd 1916 and 2215, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the changes in real terms of the Welsh Development Agency financial allocations for the next year; and what projects will be undertaken to provide work due to the closures of coal mines.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 11 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *653*.

Last week I announced that a further £660,000 would be made available in addition to the £43 million which I announced last October to support an integrated programme of regeneration in the areas affected by the coal review.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish details of the land reclamation schemes undertaken by the Welsh Development Agency during 1991-92.

Mr. David Hunt: Details of land reclamation schemes to be undertaken in 1991-92 were published by the Welsh Development Agency in the document "Landscape Wales". The agency's report and accounts for 1991-92 described the progress made.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table of capital expenditure allocated for the Welsh Development Agency for each year since 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is set out in he following table:

	Capital expenditure cash (£ million)
1985-86	49·9
1986-87	45·5
1987-88	63·1
1988-89	74·1
1989-90	94·6
1990-91	115·0
1991-92	120·5
[1]1992-93	126·3
[2]1993-94	124·3

[1]Forecast Outturn
[2]Plans

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the change in real terms of financial allocation for the Welsh Development Agency for each financial year since 1986-87.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is set out in the following table:

	Gross Allocation cash (£ million)	*Gross Allocation 1993-94 prices[1] (£ million)*
1986-87	72·0	107·4
1987-88	98·6	139·4
1988-89	115·1	151·7
1989-90	133·4	165·0
1990-91	149·2	170·9
1991-92	158·3	169·6
[2]1992-93	166·8	171·3
[3]1993-94	171·4	171·4

[1]1993-94 prices derived using latest GDP deflator
[2]Forecast Outturn
[3]Plans

Child Care

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to provide extra funds for the new unitary authorities taking on extra professionals to deal with child care when responsibility is transferred from the police and health;

(2) what plans he has to lessen the management costs of independent providers of child care who will cover several of the new unitary authority areas;

(3) whether the new unitary authorities will buy in the full range of child protection services;

(4) how the liaison work between police, health and the new unitary authorities in Gwent will operate in relation to area child protection committees.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The full legislative requirements concerning child protection currently met by the social services departments of county councils will become the responsibility of the new unitary authorities. How they will carry out these functions, including the extent to which they secure services from other providers, will be for the new authorities to determine in the light of their own needs and resources.

It will be for the new unitary authorities to decide on what liaison arrangements they should have with other agencies including the police, health authorities and the voluntary sector.

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many disabled people in Wales are currently living in *(a)* the community, *(b)* mental illness hospitals and units and *(c)* mental handicap hospitals and units.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information held centrally does not cover all categories of disability. The latest available data held centrally, on the means of accommodation of people on local authority registers of mentally handicapped individuals, are shown in the table:

Number of persons on register at 31 March 1991

Place of residence	*Number*
In the community	7,349
In health service accommodation (including hospitals and hostels)	1,397
In other accommodation (including local authority, private and voluntary residential accommodation)	1,640
Total	10,386

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children have been born in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales, with Down's syndrome in each year since 1983.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of notifications of children born with Down's syndrome to residents of Clwyd and Wales in each year since 1983 are shown in the table:

	Clwyd	*Wales*
1983	4	20
1984	8	30
1985	10	26
1986	7	27
1987	7	23
1988	4	30
1989	6	22
1990	5	25
1991	5	22

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of Down's syndrome sufferers in permanent state care in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what screening measures are available to detect Down's syndrome in the early stages of foetal development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The screening measures available to pregnant women are determined by the local health authority. Authorities are guided by the targets of the "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Maternal and Early Child Health", which was issued in August 1991 by the Welsh Health Planning Forum, in particular that by 1995 all pregnant women at high risk should be identified and offered an opportunity for pre-natal testing.

A national Down's syndrome screening group is currently looking at ways of setting guidelines for a screening programme.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what funds the Welsh Office has made available in each year since 1983 to help with the care of Down's syndrome sufferers in Wales;

(2) what provision is made for Down's syndrome sufferers and their families in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the mental handicap strategy earmarked special funds have been allocated, annually to counties to support the development of a comprehensive range of new services.

While Down's syndrome has been indentified as the cause of mental handicap in approximately 26·5 per cent. of those affected, funds are not indentified specifically for individuals with this condition.

The following table gives details of strategy allocations to date.

Welsh Office funds, for mental handicap strategy

	£ million
1983-84	1·6
1984-85	3·6
1985-86	5·0
1986-87	7·0
1987-88	9·6
1988-89	13·4
1989-90	18·5
1990-91	26·1
1991-92	34·2
1992-93	41·5

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: There has never been a need to undertake a survey of female staff in my Department as the sex of employees is evident from staff records.

A survey of the ethnic origin of staff in my Department was carried out in May 1988. There is no need for another survey since the ethnic origin of all the entrants and leavers has been monitored since that time.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from one to seven and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. David Hunt: The details, based on staff in post figures at 1 July 1992, are given in the following tables.

Women

Grade	*Number*	*Percentage*
1	—	—
2	—	—
3	1	10
4	1	14
5	11	18
6	17	19
7	39	22
Departmental Total	1,222	49

Numbers of ethnic minorities

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grades 1-6	—	—
Grade 7	2	1·1
Departmental		
Total	30	1·2

Registered disabled people

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grades 1-5	—	—
Grade 6	2	2
Grade 7	1	0·6
Departmental		
Total	38	1·6

My Department also employs several unregistered disabled people.
Note:
1 Part-time staff count as one unit
2 Includes equivalent and professional grades
3 Includes Agency and industrial staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: Most recruitment into senior grades in my Department is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency acting on behalf of the civil service commissioners. Recruits to senior grades are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the civil service Order in Council 1991 applies. The commissioners have taken various steps to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including extending links with higher education establishments to attract a wider range of applicants and using validated selection procedures. They also encourage equal opportunities training for those involved in selection.

Heads of the Valleys (Unitary Authority)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answers of 16 March to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), *Official Report*, columns *186-87*, how many and what proportion of the responses to which he refers were in favour of a unitary authority for the Heads of the Valleys; and if he will make copies of all responses received available in public libraries in Cardiff, Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Rymney, Darran Valley and New Tredegar.

Mr. David Hunt: Following my statement on 3 March 1992 I received 252 written representations about possible unitary authority boundaries in the valleys. Of these, one referred to the possibility of a heads of the valley authority. This proposal emerged primarily from my consideration of the other conflicting views I had received and my discussion of these with interested parties. Copies of the responses received to the earlier consultations are available for inspection in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament and, upon request, at the Welsh Office in Cardiff.

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much additional funding has been made available to local authorities in Wales in real terms each year since the coming into force of the Disabled Person Act 1986 to enable them to carry out its provisions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The annual local authority revenue and capital settlements cover all local authority expenditure. It is for individual authorities to decide how to apportion those resources between and within services in accordance with their statutory obligations, including those arising under this Act, and their own priorities.

Dental Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of general dental practitioners and *(b)* the number of general dental practitioners per 1,000 of the population in each Welsh health authority area since 1986.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the following tables:

General Dental Practitioners[1]

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Clwyd	87	97	99	108	111	105	102
Dyfed	83	89	91	96	98	101	105
Gwent	107	114	116	123	125	139	135
Gwynedd	65	66	63	66	69	65	66
Mid Glamorgan	121	130	131	135	134	123	133
Powys	32	34	35	34	34	36	35
South Glamorgan	125	127	130	132	131	129	127
West Glamorgan	120	123	133	133	135	134	128

[1] At 30 September.

General Dental Practitioners per 1,000 population[1]

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Clwyd	0·22	0·24	0·24	0·26	0·27	0·25
Dyfed	0·24	0·26	0·26	0·27	0·28	0·29
Gwent	0·24	0·26	0·26	0·28	0·28	0·31
Gwynedd	0·28	0·28	0·26	0·27	0·29	0·27
Mid Glamorgan	0·23	0·24	0·24	0·25	0·25	0·23
Powys	0·28	0·30	0·30	0·29	0·29	0·30

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
South Glamorgan	0·32	0·32	0·32	0·33	0·32	0·32
West Glamorgan	0·33	0·34	0·37	0·37	0·37	0·36

[1] General Dental Practitioners at 30 September and mid year estimates of population.

Estimates of population are provisional for 1991 and not yet available for 1992.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many courses of dental treatment under the national health service were undertaken in each Welsh health authority area per 1,000 of the population in each year since 1986.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not readily available and I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Employment Projects

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many unemployed people have taken part in the voluntary projects programme in Wales each year since 1986-87.

Mr. David Hunt: The voluntary projects programme (VPP) ceased in 1988 when it was subsumed by employment training.

Details of the number of participants are available only for 1987-88 when 11,000 participated in the scheme on 24 projects.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of school children in each local authority area in Wales does not receive Welsh language lessons.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The percentages of pupils who are not taught Welsh in maintained primary and secondary schools are given in the following tables.

Table 1. Primary schools[1]

	Percentage[1]
Clwyd	3·5
Dyfed	12·0
Gwent	85·1
Gwynedd	0·0
Mid Glamorgan	1·8
Powys	3·3
South Glamorgan	26·4
West Glamorgan	2·2

Table 2. Secondary schools [1 2]

	Percentage[1]
Clwyd	28·5
Dyfed	19·4
Gwent	82·8
Gwynedd	1·2
Mid Glamorgan	30·4
Powys	30·6
South Glamorgan	39·2
West Glamorgan	30·0

[1] At September 1991.
[2] Includes Grant maintained schools.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to develop a national policy for the provision of refuges and support services to women and children who are the victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of whether the number of women's refuges in Wales is sufficient for the demand; and if he will consider further funding.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government are already supporting such provision and services. In 1992-93 the Welsh Office provided over £235,000 to Welsh Women's Aid and over £438,000 for projects in individual refuges and advice centres.

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many refuges for women fleeing from domestic violence are available in Wales; and what is their total capacity.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Foreign Language Teaching

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many primary schools offer a language, other than English and Wales to their pupils and to what extent the numbers have varied over the last 10 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of primary schools offering a language other than English and Welsh to their pupils is not collected centrally.

Sealand Estate

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will include the Sealand estate, Deeside, in the estate partnership initiative.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall give careful consideration to all applications I receive by 1 June for support under this programme during the coming financial year. Estate Partnership is designed to address problems in the local authority stock.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the Sealand estate, Deeside.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no present plans to do so.

University Colleges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to the proposals set out in the report, "The case for University Colleges," prepared by the Standing Conference of Principals, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have received a copy of the report from the Standing Conference of Principals. I will be considering with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education how to respond to the report.

Stoneleigh Food Fair

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what support has been provided by his Department to Welsh food producers to exhibit their produce at the Stoneleigh food fair on 31 March.

Mr. David Hunt: Welsh Food Promotions Ltd., a company established on my initiative and partly funded by the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Wales tourist board, will be at Stoneleigh in support of individual Welsh food producers.

Class Sizes

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue advice to schools on best practice in relation to class size in primary and secondary schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for determination by school governors and head teachers in the light of local circumstances.

Welsh Centre for International Affairs

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last paid a visit to the Welsh centre for international affairs in Cardiff; and what future plans he has to make a visit.

Mr. David Hunt: Although I have met the director of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs twice, I have not visited the centre and have no present plans to do so.

Public Bodies

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the appointed bodies within Wales performing delegated Government functions.

Mr. David Hunt: Executive, advisory and NHS bodies and tribunals in Wales all have roles in the process of government and therefore to a greater or lesser extent have some functions of government delegated to them. These bodies are set out in "Public Bodies 1992" a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 23 March 1993 at column *549-50* listing the current and complete list of public bodies to which I make appointments.

Brussels

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes to visit Brussels.

Mr. David Hunt: Friday.

Civil Servants

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by Department the numbers of civil servants employed in Swansea.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of civil servants currently employed by my Department in Swansea is 10. Information on the number of staff in other Government Departments and agencies in particular locations in Wales is not held by my Department, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by Department and location the numbers of civil service jobs which have been relocated to or created in South Wales since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not held by my Department.

Key Stage 3 Tests

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the difficulties of informing parents of the assessment of their children at key stage 3 of the national curriculum before the end of the summer term.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Formal representations about this year's key stage 3 reporting arrangements have not been received. My officials have, however, established a small working group comprising representatives of the Welsh Joint Education Committee, local education authorities and the School Examinations and Assessment Council to develop the most efficient method of providing schools in Wales with the national curriculum assessment results to be used for reporting purposes.

Hill Livestock Farmers

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to bring forward measures to secure that hill livestock producers do not suffer any penalty for failing to meet the threshold of yearling ewes per flock within the current calendar year.

Mr. David Hunt: The hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme rules have always required a reasonable element of shearlings in flocks qualifying for the highest rate of allowance. Where this rule is breached without good reason we shall continue to impose penalties.

European Commission

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *549*, how many of those who have completed their secondment to the European Commission are still employed by his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: All of them.

Badger Setts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of badger setts, by county, closed or otherwise, seriously interfered with by or under licence from his Department's officials in each month from October 1991.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

Month	*Number of setts*	*County*
November 1991	2	Gwynedd
March 1992	1	Dyfed
May 1992	1	Powys
June 1992	1	Gwynedd
July 1992	3	Gwent, Clwyd and Powys
September 1992	2	Powys and Clwyd
October 1992	2	Dyfed and Powys

Month	Number of setts	County
November 1992	2	Dyfed and Powys
December 1992	1	Powys
January 1993	2	Gwynedd and Powys
March 1993	2	Clwyd and Gwent

Farming Friends Scheme

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make funds available for a farming friends scheme in Wales to help farmers with psychological and social problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to do so, but a reduction in these problems will be an important health gain target for health authorities.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing Associations

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings have been completed by the housing associations in Northern Ireland in each year since 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The number of dwellings completed by registered housing associations is as follows:

Year	Newbuild	Rehabilitation	Total
1982-83	557	243	800
1983-84	576	244	820
1984-85	646	368	1,014
1985-86	777	271	1,048
1986-87	314	390	704
1987-88	694	330	1,024
1988-89	764	110	874
1989-90	563	74	637
1990-91	533	249	782
1991-92	838	94	932

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tenants allocated houses with the housing associations come from the Housing Executive waiting list; and, of these, how many were on the priority waiting list and non-priority waiting list.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of the registered housing associations in Northern Ireland; what was the date of registration of each association; and what are the numbers of staff currently employed by each association in respect of (i) management, (ii) administration/clerical, (iii) development, (iv) housing and (v) management/ maintenance.

Mr. Atkins: The names and registration dates of each registered housing association, are set out in the table. Information on staffing in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Association	Date registered with DOE (NI)
Abbeyfield NI Development Society Limited	22 June 1981
Ballymacarrett Housing Association Limited	21 February 1979
Ballynafeigh Housing Association Limited	3 February 1977
Baptist Union of Ireland Housing Association Limited	29 October 1982
Belfast Community Housing Association Limited	12 October 1977
Belfast Improved Houses Limited	20 January 1977
Ben Madigan Housing Association Limited	27 July 1978
Botanic Housing Association Limited	31 January 1977
Broadway Housing Association Limited	16 November 1979
Church of Ireland Housing Association (NI) Limited	16 September 1977
Clonard Housing Association Limited	21 April 1978
Connswater Housing Association Limited	4 March 1977
Coral Crescent Housing Association Limited	26 October 1978
Covenanter Residential Association Limited	23 February 1977
Craigavon and District Housing Association Limited	19 September 1979
Craigowen Housing Association Limited	14 October 1977
Derry Housing Association Limited	24 August 1977
Donacloney Housing Association Limited	16 August 1977
Down and Connor Housing Association Limited	2 July 1987
Dungannon and District Housing Association Limited	24 March 1977
Flax Housing Association Limited	12 February 1987
Fold Housing Association Limited	14 December 1976
Gosford Housing Association (Armagh) Limited	5 December 1977
Grove Housing Association Limited	5 May 1977
Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Limited	24 May 1977
Hearth	10 February 1978
Larne and District Housing Association Limited	4 July 1978
Lisnagarvey Housing Association Limited	5 August 1977
Malone Housing Association Limited	28 February 1980
Masonic Housing Association (NI) Limited	13 May 1977
Newington Housing Association (1975) Limited	27 April 1977
Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association Limited	11 April 1978
North Belfast Mission Housing Society Limited	22 February 1979
Oaklee Housing Association Limited	4 November 1991
Open Door Housing Association (NI) Limited	31 July 1978
Presbyterian Housing Association (NI) Limited	23 February 1977
Royal British Legion Housing Association (NI) Limited	4 March 1977
Rural Housing Association Limited	19 March 1992
St Matthews Housing Association Limited	8 June 1977
Students Housing Association Co-op Limited	27 September 1977
Tennent Street District Housing Association Limited	8 May 1979
Triangle Women's Housing Association Limited	20 March 1978
Ulidia Housing Association Limited	10 March 1978
Ulster Homemaker Limited	30 August 1984
Willowfield Parish Church Housing Association Limited	27 April 1977
Woodvale and Shankill Housing Association Limited	3 May 1977

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the selection schemes of each registered housing association; and if he will list the

reports produced by registered housing associations describing and measuring the need which they are seeking to address.

Mr. Atkins: Copies of the selection scheme approved by the Department of the Environment (NI) for each association have been placed in the Library.

The tenants guarantee, introduced in December 1992, requires associations to make available from 1 April 1993 information on the allocation of accommodation, application procedures for tenancies and policies and procedures for deciding on priority between applicants. Associations will also be required to prepare annual summaries of their letting activities which will include a report on the number and types of lettings to different types of applicant. These summaries will be made available to inquirers.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the budgetary allocation to housing associations in each year since 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1992; and how much of the allocation in each year has been devoted to new build.

Mr. Atkins: Total allocation to housing associations, including the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association, were:

	HAs (excluding NICHA) £000	*NICHA* £000	*Total* £000
1982-83	21,000	8,500	29,500
1983-84	23,000	15,600	38,600
1984-85	25,800	14,400	40,200
1985-86	27,600	12,000	39,600
1986-87	29,800	11,500	41,300
1987-88	30,400	13,000	43,400
1988-89	32,000	13,400	45,400
1989-90	29,200	8,700	37,900
1990-91	28,200	8,600	36,800
1991-92	33,800	6,400	40,200

The new-build element of housing association expenditure, excluding NICHA, in 1990-91 and 1991-92 was £21·9 million and £28·3 million respectively. Information on capital funding to housing associations for previous years is not available on a basis which distinguishes new build from other types of expenditure.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidelines have been issued to housing associations for the selection of tenants.

Mr. Atkins: In the circular issued to all registered housing associations on 24 July 1979 the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland advised associations of the guidelines to be followed in tenant selection. A copy of the circular has been placed in the Library. The guidelines are currently under review.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers and types of dwellings each housing association has constructed under the terms of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 during each financial year since 1976-77.

Mr. Atkins: A copy of the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of applications on the waiting list of each registered housing association; and how many are on priority lists A and B, respectively.

Mr. Atkins: This information is collected annually by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland and the position at 31 March 1992 was as follows:

Association	*A applicants*	*B applicants*
Abbeyfield Northern Ireland Development Society Limited	—	—
Ballymacarrett Housing Association Ltd	—	—
Ballynafeigh Housing Association Ltd	4	6
Baptist Union of Ireland Housing Association Ltd	—	112
Belfast Community Housing Association Ltd	1	46
Belfast Improved Houses Ltd	135	[1]369
Ben Madigan Housing Association Ltd	2	16
Botanic Housing Association Ltd	5	37
Church of Ireland Housing Association (NI) Ltd	—	[1]324
Clonard Housing Association Ltd	16	43
Connswater Housing Association Ltd	—	20
Coral Crescent Housing Association Ltd	—	—
Covenanter Residential Association Ltd	—	2
Craigavon and District Housing Association Ltd	84	416
Craigowen Housing Association Ltd	—	[1]—
Derry Housing Association Ltd	85	[1]370
Donacloney Housing Association Ltd	—	11
Dungannon and District Housing Association Ltd	—	[1]439
Fold Housing Association Ltd	—	2,985
Gosford Housing Association (Armagh) Ltd	1	27
Grove Housing Association Ltd	4	54
Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd	222	[1]—
Hearth	1	3
Larne and District Housing Association Ltd	46	66
Lisnagarvey Housing Association Ltd	5	83
Malone Housing Association Ltd	8	26
Masonic Housing Association (NI) Ltd	27	198
Newington Housing Association (1975) Ltd	34	[1]56
North Belfast Mission Housing Society Ltd	1	3
Oaklee Housing Association Ltd	34	[1]146
Open Door Housing Association (NI) Ltd	70	[1]29
Presbyterian Housing Association (NI) Ltd	116	278
Royal British Legion Housing Association (NI) Ltd	5	606
St. Matthews Housing Association Ltd	6	31
Students Housing Association Co-op Ltd	145	489
Tennent St. District Housing Association Ltd	16	27
Triangle Women's Housing Association Ltd	—	[1]—
Ulidia Housing Association Ltd	14	[1]26

Association	A applicants	B applicants
Willowfield Parish Church Housing Association Ltd	4	37
Woodvale and Shankill Housing Association Ltd	8	46

Note: A substantial number of special needs schemes are managed by voluntary agencies on behalf of the associations marked [1] and information on the waiting lists held by those agencies is not available.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the role of *(a)* the Housing Executive, in relation to individual housing associations and the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and *(b)* the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations.

Mr. Atkins: The Housing Executive's main role in relation to housing associations is the assessment of overall housing need and confirmation of need for each proposed housing association scheme. In its enabling role the executive may assist in the development plans of housing associations by the transfer of land and property.

The executive works closely with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations to produce the housing association element of the housing development strategy, which is submitted annually to the Department of the Environment (NI) to support the bid for housing investment in Northern Ireland. I understand that the executive also meets regularly at board level with the federation to discuss matters of mutual interest.

The role of the Northern Ireland Federation is to promote, establish, encourage and assist the formation and the conduct and activities of housing associations in Northern Ireland; to make representations and negotiate on behalf of the federation, housing associations, and other bodies with regard to housing policy and administration; to ensure that maximum co-operation and efficiency is attained among housing associations in Northern Ireland and to ensure a close and harmonious liaison and relationship with the National Federation of Housing Associations and other bodies involved in housing activity.

Homelessness

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to ensure that the housing associations assist the Housing Executive in meetings its duties to the homeless under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

Mr. Atkins: Registered associations are required to give priority on their waiting lists to applicants who qualify for group A status under the executive's selection scheme. This includes applicants who are accepted as homeless by the Housing Executive.

The Department regularly monitors the management of each assocation's day-to-day affairs, including the operation of their selection schemes to ensure that tenancies are allocated in accordance with approved schemes.

Homelessness

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many units of temporary accommodation and move on accommodation have been provided by housing associations for homeless people since 1990; and how many are in the Housing Association Development Programme.

Mr. Atkins: In addition to temporary housing provided for special needs groups such as ex-offenders, women and children at risk, registered housing associations in Northern Ireland have provided 110 units of temporary accommodation for homeless people since 1 January 1990.

The 1993-94 to 1995-96 development programme includes proposals to provide 135 bed spaces for people who may require temporary accommodation.

Housing associations do not provide accommodation designated specifically for allocation to people "moving on" from temporary accommodation.

Nephrops

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a decision was made to exempt the one net rule for nephrops trawlers; in which fishing areas this exemption will apply; whether the Northern Ireland fleet fish for nephrops in these areas; what consultation was undertaken with the Northern Ireland fishing industry prior to the decision; and if he will make a statement about the implications of this decision for the Northern Ireland fishing industry.

Mr. Hanley: The decision to exempt the one rule for nephrops trawlers was made on 5 March; it applies in areas IV, North sea, and VI, west Scotland, north of latitude 56°N. Any fishing by Northern Ireland vessels for nephrops in these areas is minimal and there was no consultation with the Northern Ireland industry prior to the decision, which has little or no direct impact on the Northern Ireland fishing industry.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will require the regulator and Northern Ireland Electricity to obtain an independent cost/benefit study for Northern Ireland of all alternative power sources prior to awarding future power purchase agreements; and if he will require the most economic supply identified taking account of economic, social and environmental issues as well as security of supply to be purchased by Northern Ireland Electricity.

Mr. Atkins: The term under which NIE will award future power purchase agreements are governed by its licence which contains an economic purchasing obligation. In entering into any such agreement NIE will have to satisfy the Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what studies his Department has made of the impact on domestic electricity prices of the Scottish-Northern Ireland interconnector becoming operational; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: An economic evaluation of generating options was commissioned by the Department and this showed interconnection with Scotland to be the most attractive option available for meeting the need for new capacity in the late 1990s.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what studies his Department has made of the price differences between domestic electricity prices in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom; what assessment has been made of the effect the increases in value-added tax on fuel will have on the average home fuel bills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Domestic electricity tariffs in 1992-93 are broadly comparable to those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

It is estimated that the extension of VAT to domestic fuel and power will add about £1·20 in 1994-95 and £2·70 in 1995-96 to households' average weekly fuel bills in Northern Ireland, at 1991 prices. This estimate takes no account of the effects of any energy-saving measures by householders.

International Fund for Ireland

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of financial assistance provided by the International Fund for Ireland in each of the last four years to date for *(a)* construction of new hotels and *(b)* refurbishment of existing hotels, together with details of the purpose for which each qualifying hotel project was assisted.

Mr. Mates: The International Fund for Ireland is administered by an independent board appointed by the United Kingdom and Irish Governments. All questions pertaining to the disbursement of funds are a matter for the board and accordingly I have arranged to pass the hon. Gentleman's question to the chairman for reply.

Employees (Religious Affiliation)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of each department of the Northern Ireland civil service;

(2) what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Industrial Development Board.

Mr. Atkins: Monitoring of religious affiliation of the employees of the Northern Ireland Departments and the Industrial Development Board is undertaken centrally by the Northern Ireland civil service equal opportunities unit located in the Department of Finance and Personnel. I would therefore refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 19 March 1993, *Official Report*, Volume 221, column 150.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of each district council in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not held centrally. It is a matter for each district council in Northern Ireland to monitor the religious composition of its work force in accordance with section 27 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.

The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland also monitors the fair employment practices of district councils under section 35 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, but does not identify separately expenditure on specific activities on this type, which would be negligible.

Health Boards (Staff Bonuses)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the nature and purpose of performance bonuses paid to staff of each health board within the past 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: Incentive bonus payments are made to certain ancillary and general staff employed by health and social services boards in return for increased productivity. In each instance the bonus is the result of the application of a measured day work scheme. Such a scheme is where a given number of staff agree, on a group basis, to work to a predetermined incentive performance level in carrying out their duties at specific standards. In return they are paid a fixed percentage bonus which is calculated on the staff group basis. All schemes must be self-financing.

A performance-related pay scheme is in operation for general managers, unit general managers, senior managers and senior nurse managers. This is a scheme for relating rewards to quantifiable achievement rather than to subjective judgments of personal qualities. This scheme enables management to reward staff who have attained a high level of achievement against individual performance review targets set on an annual basis.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Management

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he expects expenditure on waste management and contaminated land to vary in real terms over the next three years.

Mr. Maclean: My Department does not hold general information on past trends or future plans for expenditure of this sort.

Landfill Gas

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much less will be spent in real terms in the present estimates compared with the 1992 estimates on the problem of landfill gas.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not held in the form requested. However, local authorities are currently expected to spend some £12·8 million in the financial year 1992-93 on schemes wholly or partly to deal with gas from former landfills and which the Government are supporting with supplementary credit approvals. A total of £12 million has been set aside for 1993-94 for supplementary credit approvals covering landfill gas and other types of contaminated land.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department will spend on waste recycling in the current year and each of the next two years in real terms.

Mr. Maclean: The resources allocated for waste recycling in 1992-93 and the amounts currently proposed

for 1993-94 and 1994-95 within the expenditure plans described in the Department's 1993 annual report (Cm 2207), including supplementary credit approvals to support local authorities' capital expenditure on waste recycling projects, are as follows:

	1992-93 £000	*1993-94*[3] *£000*	*1994-95*[3] *£000*
UK 2000[1]	168	—	—
Environmental Grant Fund/Environmental Action Fund	289	[2]376	[2]216
Consultancies/Research	470	[3]320	[3]84
Publicity	[4]312	[3]18	[6]—
Special Grants Programme	80	—	—
Staff resources	106	111	[6]—
TOTAL	1,425	825	300
Supplementary Credit Approvals	15,000	14,598	15,358

Notes:
[1] A substantial part of this grant to Friends of the Earth was used for work to encourage waste minimisation and the recycling and composting of waste.
[2] Grants offered.
[3] Current plans, not yet confirmed.
[4] Forecast expenditure.
[5] Deflated to 1992-93 prices.
[6] Not yet known.

The Department of Trade and Industry also has expenditure on this subject.

Toxic Waste (Broadcast)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of a transcript of his interview on the import of toxic waste broadcast on Radio Four's "World At One" on 23 March.

Mr. Howard: I have arranged for a copy of the transcript of this interview to be placed in the Library.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what report he has received from the chairman of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee following the recent meeting to discuss its 20-year review of nuclear waste policy.

Mr. Maclean: None. The meeting referred to was a first step in the review by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee which is to look at radioactive waste disposal issues likely to arise over the next 20 years.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Department first undertook a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff in 1987. This has been supplemented by further surveys and a continuous survey of job applicants. The most recent re-survey of the remaining staff for whom there is no ethnic record was completed earlier this month.

The Department analyses data on the number of women in the Department on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Howard: The numbers and percentages of women at grades 1 to 7 and overall in the Department are:

Grade	*Female*	*Percentage*
1	—	—
2	3	43
3	5	15
4	—	—
5	18	13
6	24	18
7	130	16
Overall	2,741	41

There are no staff from ethnic minorities in grades 1 to 4. The number and percentage of ethnic minority staff at grade 5 is 2 (1·4 per cent. of grade), at grade 6 there is 1 (0·3 per cent.) and at grade 7 there are 9 (1·1 per cent.) Overall, 504 (7·5 per cent.) of the Department's staff are from ethnic minorities.

There are no disabled staff in grades 1 to 6. The Department employs three grade 7s who are known to be disabled but who are not registered, representing 0·4 per cent. of the grade. Overall, the Department employs 98 (1·5 per cent.) disabled staff (registered and non-registered).

Housing Grants

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those organisations which have received grants under section 429A of the Housing Act 1985; as amended, in 1992-93 showing in such cases the value of the grant and the purpose for which it was made.

Mr. Baldry: In the financial year 1992-93, my Department approved 117 grants totalling £7,411,393 under section 429A of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by section 16 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986). These grants were issued for a variety of purposes.

Promotion and feasibility grants

Grants were made to consultancies, housing associations and secondary co-operatives to enable them to promote to local authority tenants the full range of housing management and tenure options available to them. Further grant is made available, on an estate-specific basis, to enable these organisations to undertake a feasibility study leading to a report outlining future options for the management of the estate.

Agency name	*Grant offered £*
Birmingham CHS	67,627
Banks of the Wear	161,197
Catch	269,260
CDS (Liverpool)	198,613
Chapman Hendy	19,176
Chisel	90,671
CHS (NW)	98,160
English Churches HA	112,203
Community Projects Trust	53,931

Agency name	Grant offered £
Devon CDA	4,980
Federation of Hackney Tenants' and Residents' Associations	51,678
Hexagon HA	85,901
Leicester Housing Association	166,071
Liverpool Housing Trust	138,125
Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation	48,869
Paddington Churches HA	50,209
Priority Estates Project	614,135
Pic Services	75,559
Pieda	78,164
Public Participation, Consultation and Research Ltd.	126,055
Raynsford Dallison Associates	29,254
Safe Neighbourhoods Unit	89,228
Solon CHS	134,734
South London Families' HA	78,613
Tenant Action	50,805
Tide	112,431
Tenant Paricipation Advisory Service	1,051,288
Tricare	11,745
Yorkshire CHS	44,874
Total	4,113,596

Development Grants

Development grants were made to tenant steering groups or tenants' and residents' associations which were able to evidence sufficient interest in forming a tenant management organisation, either an estate management board [EMB], or a tenant management co-operative [TMC], following an estate-wide ballot or poll on completion of a feasibility study.

Tenant group	EMB	TMC	Offered £
Angell Town	1	—	31,739
Arica Co-op	—	1	8,713
Atholl & Braemar	—	1	10,585
Blackbrook	1	—	12,838
Botcherby	1	—	21,976
Browning	1	—	16,508
Burrows St/Green Lane	—	1	18,290
Clapton Park	1	—	32,140
Claybrow	—	1	8,326
Chalkhill	1	—	29,536
Chelsea Manor Ct	—	1	9,776
Chuckery	—	1	10,726
Church Court	—	1	17,006
Colwell	—	1	16,296
Cottington Close	—	1	9,598
Crusader	—	1	9,791
De Beauvoir	1	—	26,317
Five Ways	—	1	5,809
Gascoyne	1	—	19,594
Haslingden	1	—	3,567
Higgingshaw Village	1	—	20,295
Holland Rise/Whitebeam Close	1	—	18,788
Holland Town	—	1	5,645
Kilburn Square	—	1	7,898
Lancaster West	1	—	23,771
Magdalen	—	1	1,000
Old/New Loughborough	1	—	35,500
Mowmacre Hill	1	—	22,821
New Park Village	—	1	10,762
North Peckham	1	—	37,485
Parkwood	—	1	20,693
Pembroke	1	—	14,046
Pleck	1	—	11,246
Ridings Way	—	1	24,711
Scotland Gate	—	1	9,011
Springfield Horseshoe	—	1	16,931
Suffolk Estate	—	1	3,094
Sutton Park 'A'	—	1	13,238
St. Mark's	—	1	23,372
St. Pancras Court	—	1	1,666
St. Paul's	—	1	11,195
Tabard Gardens	—	1	45,697
Trowbridge	—	1	17,658
Tustin	—	1	25,119
Warwick Crescent	—	1	8,019
West Houghton	1	—	23,044
West View	1	—	23,850
Whitworth Valley	1	—	1,752
Wyke Estate	—	1	3,333
Wyncote	—	1	7,795
Total			808,569

"Recommendation 9" Grants

The Government's report "Tenants in the Lead" (DoE, 1989) recommended, inter alia, a series pilot demonstration projects which linked decentralisation of housing management services to increased tenant involvement. 1992-93 was the second and final year of this two-year programme.

Local authority	Grant offered £
Basildon	35,200
Birmingham City	50,000
Bolton Metro	36,740
Cambridge City	50,000
Camden	49,985
Derby City	50,000
Gateshead	22,687
Globe Town (Tower Hamlets)	50,000
Greenwich	50,000
Harlow	43,086
Lambeth	49,900
Rochdale	33,146
Rossendale	31,430
Salford	32,638
Sandwell	50,000
Southampton	21,250
West Lancashire	26,470
Westminster	50,000
Wolverhampton	50,237
Total	782,769

National Tenants' Resource Centre

Grant of £70,363 was offered to this project, which seeks to establish a dedicated residential training facility for tenants at Trafford hall, near Chester, to support its fund-raising and planning programme.

	Grant offered £
National Tenants' Resource Centre	70,363

Housing Management Grants

Grants were made to various organisations on an individual basis for projects which contribute towards innovation in housing management.

Organisation	Grant Offered £
Association of Community Technical Aid Centres (13 Training events and 1 conference for tenants and professionals)	24,398
Toby Graves (Salary for housing post graduate trainee)	2,600
Aldbourne Associates (Review to establish a general picture of current practice in education and training in social housing)	37,876
Specialist Information Training Resource Agency (Specialist needs housing training for NVQs)	39,857
Federation of Black Housing Organisations (Raise awareness of and provide information on NVQs via written materials, presentations, advice and guidance)	26,442
Safe Neighbourhoods Unit (Development of crime prevention modules and production of video)	27,000
Tower Blocks Directory (Helps management of tower blocks through best practice information)	11,142
West Midlands Special Needs Consortium (Set up and run management development programme and development NVQs)	20,483
Northern Consortium of Housing Authorities (Development of low cost training and conference programme, leading to the production of a training package)	24,536
Total	214,334

Research Grants

Small research grants are occasionally made available to provide feedback and data on aspects of grant policy which would be difficult or impossible to determine by other methods. In 1992-93, two grants were made available, to investigate the role of training in the development of TMOs (Glasgow university) and to ascertain the impact of the two-year recommendation 9 programme (LSE).

Organisation	Offered £
Glasgow University	28,030
LSE Housing	23,797
Total	51,827

Studentships and Bursaries

Grants are made annually, via the Economic and Social Research Council, to provide resources to support students following university courses leading to the Institute of Housing's professional qualifications. From 1 January 1993 bursaries have been available to assist tenants following the Institute of Housing's new national certificate in tenant participation (NCTP). These discretionary bursaries are paid via the tenant participation advisory service (TPAS).

	£
Economic and Social Research Council	1,053,000
TPAS	30,000
Total	1,083,000

Contract Payments

Priority Estates Project Ltd. received contract payments to undertake training and action research into tenant participation. 1992-93 is the last year of the contract.

	£
Priority Estates Project	286,935
Total	286,935

Tenants' Choice Legislation

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answers of 15 March, *Official Report*, columns 76 to 78, if the answer covers transfers to tenants' management boards with the estates remaining in the ownership of the local council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Grants offered in 1992-93 under section 429A of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, include grants paid to tenants' organisations for the purpose of developing tenant management organisations (TMOs): either estate management boards (EMBs) or tenant management co-operatives (TMCs).

Both kinds of TMO are able to take on the management of their housing through a management agreement negotiated with the local authority under the provisions of section 27 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, though ownership of the houses remains with the local authority. Since April 1990, when grants were first made available directly to tenants' organisations, 66 TMOs have been established, with a further 50 in their development phase.

The Government now propose, through powers which will be taken in the Housing and Urban Development Bill, to introduce a new right to manage for local authority tenants. Providing they are able to meet certain criteria, tenants' organisations will be able to serve on the local authority a notice of their intention to exercise the right to manage. Regulations will provide a framework for the procedures which must be followed by tenants' organisations and local authorities in circumstances where the right to manage is exercised. If these are successfully carried through, the local authority will be required to enter into a management agreement—the form of which will be specified by the Secretary of State—with the TMO. The Government's recent consultation paper "Tenant Involvement and the Right to Manage" (DOE/Welsh Office 1992) sets out in more detail the policy background and procedural arrangements for this important new right.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Howard: Within the last 12 months market testing within the Department, apart from the Property Services Agency, has been commenced in the following specialist services which are currently provided in-house for the Department's own benefit:

Training Services
Accommodation Facilities Management

Design, Drawing and Print Services
Registry Services
Statistical Services
Research and Research Services (Phase 1)
Office Cleaning for Government Car Service and Inter-departmental Despatch Service
Accounts Support for Government Car Service and Inter-departmental Despatch Service
Engineering Workshops at Building Research Establishment (BRE).
Stores at BRE.

The forward programme, from October 1993 onwards, has yet to be determined.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities pay the client contribution element of the home energy efficiency scheme; and what proportion of the total this represents;

(2) how many network installers operate hardship funds; and what proportion of the total this represents.

Mr. Maclean: These figures are not available centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the relationship between financial allocations to network installers and the estimated number of households eligible for grants under the home energy efficiency scheme within that network installer's area;

(2) what plans he has to ensure that financial allocations under the home energy efficiency scheme from 1993-94 relate to local need rather than the previous performance of a network installer.

Mr. Maclean: Eligibility for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme depends upon receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit—council tax benefit from 1 April 1993—or disability working allowance. In addition the property must meet certain criteria concerning both existing insulation and whether or not grant has been paid for similar work under previous schemes. It is not possible to estimate the numbers that might be eligible in a particular area at a particular time.

The present allocation system takes into account the proven ability of an installer to carry out work, thus avoiding sterilisation of funds. For listed contractors, allocations are intended to ensure that similar levels of funding are available in each area.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 11 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *836*, how he accounts for the lower take-up of home energy efficiency grants in the London area; and what measures he proposes to resolve the situation.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 4 March 1993 at column 263.

Market Charters

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints his Department has received regarding market charters.

Mr. Robin Squire: My Department has received 15 such complaints since 1 January 1991.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department gives to local authority charter holders as to the terms they can require for the granting of their consent for a new market within their charter area.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. Any such terms are a matter for negotiation between the franchise holder and the operator of such a new market. We are, however, concerned that the existence of market franchise rights may impose undue restriction on the development of local enterprise and are reviewing these rights as part of the Department's deregulation programme.

London Forum

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of public funding is being made available to the London Forum.

Sir George Young: The forum will seek funds mainly from the private sector. The Department has met the costs of launching the forum. But we have no plans to fund the forum's activities in promoting London.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of the cost of the London Forum's breakfast launch on 29 March.

Sir George Young: The total cost of organising and staging the launch of the London Forum on 29 March was approximately £15,000. This includes some £4,900 for hire of the venue and catering, £4,600 for the design and production of printed material and £4,900 for administration.

Elderly People's Homes

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken by his Department within the last two years to improve the advice and information available on the thermal efficiency of elderly people's homes.

Mr. Maclean: The introduction of the home energy efficiency scheme on 1 January 1991 made grants available for the first time for the provision of basic energy efficiency advice for those on low incomes. Compulsory qualifications for those giving advice under the scheme were introduced in April 1992 to ensure a high standard of advice provision. Information and advice on energy efficiency in the home is also available through my Department's "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" campaign.

Elderly People's Homes

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to instigate a survey to ascertain the number of elderly people suffering as a result of cold homes and low body temperatures during the winter months.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply. We are awaiting the results of research by the Medical Research Council on the relationship between cold weather and excess winter sickness.

Market Charters

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many proposed new market developments have failed to take place because of *(a)*

injunctions taken out by charter holders or *(b)* financial demands by charter holders for the granting of their consent;

(2) how many, and which, market charter holders have over the last five years sought a court injunction to restrain a proposed market within their charter area.

Mr. Robin Squire: We do not have this information.

Public Bodies

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many business people he has appointed to public bodies since 1987.

Mr. Howard: Such information is not available centrally, but appointments to my Department's public bodies are made from people from all backgrounds and all walks of life.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the specific length of time for which Her Majesty's Government have been opposed to the import of the toxic waste from developed countries to which he made general reference in his interview on "The World at One" on 23 March.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's policy that developed countries should become self-sufficient in disposing of their own waste was set out in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" in September 1990.

Recycling

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities will receive supplementary credit approvals for recycling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is today announcing the allocation of £15 million in supplementary credit approvals for recycling investment by English local authorities. Local authorities are now more involved in recycling than ever before. Today's announcement continues our programme of support for recycling which is very important in helping authorities to implement their recycling strategies.

Now that the vast majority of waste collection authorities have prepared their recycling plans, many are keen to start implementing them. Many waste disposal authorities are also eager to do more. So it is no surprise that the demand for supplementary credit approvals (SCAs) for recycling has been higher than ever this year.

Under our environmental partnership scheme, the aim is to maximise investment in recycling by combining SCAs with authorities' own capital receipts and private sector contributions. Schemes which do this have done best in this year's allocations.

But many other schemes have also received support. We have given particular priority to schemes to collect waste oil and CFCs for recycling. Altogether supplementary credit approvals have been distributed to 161 authorities for 307 schemes, ranging from home composing projects to mini recycling centres.

We received bids totalling £35 million so we have had to take some tough decisions in making allocations. Each authority is today being notified of the outcome of its bid. Authorities whose bids were not successful, due to the heavy demand on the funds available, will naturally be disappointed.

Some authorities are keen to develop large capital-intensive projects such as central compositing plants and materials reclamation facilities. Others want to introduce extensive kerbside collection schemes. If we had given approvals to many such schemes, we would have had very few resources left for other authorities. We have generally not been able to give approvals to schemes of this sort except where they are being partly funded from authorities' own capital contributions or by the private sector or where they continue a programme which we have funded in previous years.

The following authorities have been issued supplementary credit approvals for recycling for 1993-94:

Authority	*Allocation £000*
London Boroughs	
Barnet	200
Bromley	13·5
Croydon	155
Ealing	1·175
Enfield	50
Hackney	170
Haringey	20
Hillingdon	5
Kingston upon Thames	48
Lambeth	112·25
Merton	97
Newham	100
Redbridge	168
Richmond	70
Southwark	30
Sutton	365
Tower Hamlets	53
Waltham Forest	150
Wandsworth	20
Metropolitan Authorities	
Barnsley	135
Bolton	75
Bury	30
Calderdale	30
Doncaster	16
Dudley	100
Gateshead	35·5
Kirklees	35
Knowsley	110
Leeds	1,410
Liverpool	270
Newcastle upon Tyne	600
Oldham	98
Rochdale	36
Rotherham	19
St. Helens	7·7
Sandwell	20
South Tyneside	7
Stockport	55·575
Wakefield	340
West Yorkshire Waste Management	1,137
Wirral	24
Wolverhampton	53
County Councils	
Cambridgeshire	240
Cheshire	20
Cornwall	40
Cumbria	105
Devon	240
Durham	50
Hampshire	517
Hereford and Worcester	11
Hertfordshire	20

Authority	Allocation £000
Leicestershire	106
Lincolnshire	175
Northumberland	7
North Yorkshire	76·5
Nottinghamshire	175
Oxfordshire	150
Somerset	78·5
Suffolk	48
Wiltshire	20
District Councils	
Adur	40
Allerdale	75
Alnwick	33
Amber Valley	20
Bassetlaw	8
Bath	20·4
Beverley	20
Blaby	40
Bournemouth	29
Brighton	60
Bristol	248·75
Broxbourne	105
Browtowe	77
Burnley	45
Carlisle	20
Chelmsford	20
Cheltenham	60
Cherwell	15
Chester	200
Chesterfield	28
Chiltern	50
Copeland	48
Craven	50
Darlington	6
Derby	70
Derbyshire Dales	20·75
Easington	7·8
East Dorset	15
East Hertfordshire	42
Eden	13
Ellesmere Port and Neston	10
Gedling	13
Great Grimsby	70
Guildford	60
Harborough	30
Harlow	17
Hartlepool	150
Hastings	50
Havant	17·5
Hinckley and Bosworth	20
Hull	175
Hyndburn	30
Kerrier	125
Lancaster	20
Lanbaugh on Tees	64
Leicester	90
Melton	40
Mid Bedfordshire	35
Mid Suffolk	60·5
Middlesborough	23
Milton Keynes	1,400
Newark and Sherwood	50
North Dorset	25
North Hertfordshire	12
Norwich	20
Nottingham	71·8
Nuneaton and Bedworth	37
Oswestry	65
Oxford	205
Pendle	15
Peterborough	12·35
Plymouth	160
Poole	37·5
Portsmouth	10
Preston	10
Reading	15
Ribble Valley	7
Rochester upon Medway	145
Rother	40
Rushmoor	70
Scarborough	25
Selby	30
Shrewsbury and Atcham	50
South Derbyshire	50
South Herefordshire	20
South Lakeland	28·75
South Norfolk	50
South Northamptonshire	75
South Somerset	100
St. Albans	70
St. Edmundsbury	26·5
Stockton on Tees	96·5
Surrey Heath	42
Tendring	4
Test Valley	91·5
Tewkesbury	30
Vale of White Horse	20
Watford	30
Waverley	30
Wealdon	100
Welwyn Hatfield	40
West Devon	75
West Dorset	20
West Wiltshire	116
Winchester	26
Woking	33·7
Wokingham	40
Woodspring	10
Wrekin	90
Wychavon	15
Wycombe	20

Council Tax

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what estimate he has made of the total cost to charities, which were formerly exempt from local taxes on residential care homes, of the imposition of council tax;

(2) what effect the imposition of council tax on charities with residential care homes will have on modifying residential care accommodation in line with the Government's community care principles; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations the Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has had from the Charities Tax Reform Group about the effect of imposing council tax on charitable residential care accommodation; what reply is being sent; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have received a letter from the charities tax reform group which follows up a meeting and correspondence I have had with one of their members. My replies have explained that the council tax is a tax paid by residents, whether directly or through their landlords. There is no reason why one group of residents should be advantaged simply because their landlord is a charity. Instead we are targeting help by reference to the circumstances of residents, through the discount, disabled reduction, council tax benefit and transitional relief systems.

We have been particularly concerned to ensure that residents of residential care homes—whether or not run by charities—should not face unreasonable council tax

burdens. Many homes will receive a one-band reduction in respect of features required for their disabled residents. Care homes without resident staff will not pay the personal element of the tax, which will mean a 50 per cent. discount. And many care homes will qualify for substantial amounts of transitional relief. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security took account of the costs of the council tax in his uprating of benefits for care home residents, which will take effect on 1 April. Such benefits were generally increased by more than the rate of inflation.

Because we do not know the circumstances of each individual care home, including the council tax band into which it falls, we cannot estimate the total amount of council tax which they will pay. But a care home in the highest band receiving a reduction for disability and a 50 per cent. discount might pay about £9 per week, even without the transitional reduction scheme. With that scheme the cost might be as little as £3·25 a week. Care homes in lower bands would pay even less. These amounts equate to a few tens of pence per resident.

Care home residents, like those in the community, will be asked to make a contribution to the costs of local authority services from which they benefit. I believe that these contributions are eminently reasonable; because of the structure of the tax, they are likely to be rather smaller than those made by people living in the community.

Commission for the New Towns

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he intends to make to codify and publicise the financial management relationship between his Department and the Commission for the New Towns.

Mr. Baldry: I am pleased to announce that I have today issued a management statement which has been agreed with the Commission for the New Towns. This comes into force on 1 April 1993, and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House. This document sets out the main objectives of the Commission and the structure of financial accountability between my Department and the Commission.

Travellers

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures the Government propose to tackle the problem of illegal camping by gipsies.

Mr. Baldry: My Department and the Welsh Office issued a consultation paper "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968", on 18 August 1992. The paper set out our proposals for reducing illegal camping. It was widely circulated, and we have received 939 formal responses, copies of which are in the Department's library. A list of the responses is in the Library of the House.

Responses were received from local authorities, police authorities, the churches, farmers, landowners, members of the public and, not least, gipsies and other travellers. Most respondents acknowledged the deficiencies of the present arrangements for providing caravan sites for gipsies, although few made any constructive suggestions for change.

The existing system of local authorities' providing caravan sites has not yielded sufficient accommodation for gipsies. Nor has it reduced the incidence of illegal camping, which can be an intolerable nuisance for residents of the settled community. The Government consider that local authorities should have stronger powers to deal quickly and effectively with illegal camping, and that the Exchequer should no longer have an open-ended commitment to meet gipsies' accommodation needs; more gipsies should be encouraged to find their own sites.

Accordingly, as soon as parliamentary time allows, my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales propose to give local authorities in England and Wales a new power to direct trespassers to remove their caravans from land; failure to comply with such a direction would be a criminal offence. They also propose that it would be a criminal offence if, having left, the traveller returns to the same land as a trespasser within three months. Local authorities would then have the power to evict on receipt of a magistrate's order. They propose that the duty which the 1968 Act places on local authorities to provide caravan sites for gipsies will be repealed although local authorities would be given a discretionary power to do so. They also propose the repeal of the Secretary of State's powers to direct and designate local authorities, and to provide grant for sites.

After consideration of the responses to the consultation paper they have decided that it is not necessary to give authorities a power to seize caravans. Nor do they now propose to offer financial assistance to gipsies to move into conventional housing, although they continue to believe that gipsy families who wish to make that move should be encouraged to do so.

Finally, they will issue for public consultation shortly new draft guidance to local planning authorities. Their intention is that the draft guidance and their legislative proposals should put gipsies in the same position as other developers under the planning system; but also should ensure that the system recognises gipsies' special accommodation needs. It should enhance gipsies' confidence in the planning system, and lead to the provision of more sites to gipsies requirements.

The Government believe that these changes will serve better the original objectives of the 1968 Act, to provide legal sites for gipsies and to eliminate illegal camping.

Dioxin Contamination

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further investigations have been made of dioxin contamination of soils and herbage in Derbyshire.

Mr. Maclean: Investigations have continued following the publication of reports by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on dioxin contamination in the Bolsover area of Derbyshire. These have identified slightly elevated levels of dioxins in a number of samples of soils and herbage at Staveley. The pattern of dioxins differs from that found in previous samples near Bolsover, suggesting a different source. Further inquiries by the inspectorate at industrial processes in the area suggest that emissions from a foundry at Staveley may be responsible. The management of the foundry have given the inspectorate their full co-operation.

The foundry comes within the scope of local authority air pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and these findings have been conveyed to Chesterfield borough council. A copy of the findings has been placed in the Library of the House.

Human exposure to dioxin contamination in the area would be most likely to arise through consumption of locally produced fatty foods, such as milk. Samples of milk from two farms close to the plant, taken in 1991, were well within the normal range for urban/industrial areas, and not a cause for concern. There is no reason at present to suppose that the manner of operation of the plant has changed significantly since 1991, but as a precautionary measure my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is now arranging for further milk samples to be taken.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to his Department's cash limits for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: I propose to make the following changes:

(i) The DOE/OES non-voted cash limit for 1992-93 will be increased by £48,083,000 from £109,016,000 to £157,099,000. The provision of additional supplementary credit approvals will enable local authorities to raise finance to fulfil their obligations to contribute part of the cost of certain roads built by the Commission for the New Towns in England. The increase, which is exceptionally high as it includes provision for the capitalisation of contributions from Buckinghamshire County Council in respect of earlier years, will be wholly offset by a counterbalancing Commission for the New Towns receipt (see (iii) (c) below).

(ii) The DOE/LACAP non-voted cash limit for 1992-93 will be increased by £7,881,000 from £2,943,088,000 to £2,950,969,000. The provision of £6,231,000 additional supplementary credit approvals will enable Warrington BC, Milton Keynes BC and The Wrekin BC to purchase residual rented housing stock from the Commission for the New Towns in England; this increase is wholly offset by a counterbalancing receipt for the Commission. It also includes a transfer of £150,00 in respect of essential repairs to a number of properties included in the bulk transfer of housing to Warrington BC. It also includes £1,500,000 of supplementary credit approvals transferred from 1993-94 to take account of a revised forecast of the profile of supplementary credit approvals to offset some categories of commutation losses.

(iii) The DOE/NT (New Towns) non-voted cash limit for 1992-93 will be increased by £137,186,000 from minus £293,636,000 to minus £156,450,000. This net increase is the result of the following individual changes:

(a) an increase of £191,650,000, reflecting the effect on receipts of the present state of the property market;
(b) a reduction of £150,000 resulting from the need to finance essential repairs to properties transferred to Warrington BC as described in (ii) above; and
(c) reductions of £48,083,000 and £6,231,000 resulting from additional receipts from local authorities financed by the cash limit increases described in (i) and (ii) above respectively

(iv) The External Finance Limit for Letchworth Garden City Corporation in 1992-93 will be increased by £650,000 from minus £650,000 to zero. This reflects changes in the Corporation's financing profile as a result of the continuing depression in the property market.

(v) The DOE/LACAP non-voted cash limit for 1993-94 will be reduced by £1,500,000 from £2,462,975,000 to £2,461,475,000, reflecting the revised forecast of the profile of supplementary credit approvals to offset some categories of commutation losses.

These changes will either be offset or charged to the Reserve, and will not therefore add to the planning total of public expenditure.

Commercial Property Leases

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals the Government have to reform the basis for commercial property leases.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor has today announced that the Government propose to implement the Law Commission Report (No. 174) "Landlord and Tenant Law: Privity of Contract and Estate" for future, but not for existing leases.

The Government have been conscious of other concerns about the operation of commercial property leases. They have no intention of legislating in any way that would alter the terms in existing contracts. However, the Government will shortly produce a consultation paper inviting views on three aspects of commercial leasing which have been causing concern:

Upward Only Rent Reviews;
Confidentiality clauses;
and dispute resolution procedures.

We will consult widely with interested bodies and will carefully consider the outcome before deciding whether it would be appropriate to introduce legislation on these issues in relation to new leases.

Hazardous Waste Incineration

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has held with other member states of the European Community concerning the draft directive on the incineration of hazardous waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 22 March 1993]:* Since the draft directive was adopted by the European Commission in March last year, there have been several discussions between the Commission and experts from member states, including the United Kingdom, on the draft. I attended a meeting of the Environment Council on 23 March at which the Council took note of a progress report on the draft.

Quality Assurance

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider requiring consultants used directly or indirectly by his Department to achieve BS 5750 quality assurance, and to provide appropriate warranties, where structural safety, ground stabilisation, treatment of ground pollution contamination, methane and radon are concerned.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* It is for each consultant who chooses to tender for contracts let by, on behalf of, or in connection with grant-aid from my Department to establish in his or her own way his or her ability to carry out the work specified and to arrange whatever indemnities or warranties are appropriate. BS 5750 is not necessarily the appropriate way to demonstrate "quality assurance" in every case.

Rechem Plant, Pontypool

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for Wales of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *259*, what was the outcome of Her Majesty's Government's representations to the German Government concerning the import of toxic waste to the Rechem plant at Pontypool.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* I have nothing to add to the answer which I give the hon. Member on 30 March 1993.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities are known to his Department *(a)* to be debt free and *(b)* to have become debt free in 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 30 March 1993.

Information on those authorities which have eliminated their longer-term, external debt during 1992-93 and will become debt free for capital control purposes in 1993-94 is not yet available.

Wildlife Trade (Italy)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance the United Kingdom Government have received from the EC secretariat of CITES regarding wildlife trade with Italy.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The CITES secretariat, which is not linked to the EC, informed us in February of the suspension of the Standing Committee's earlier recommendations that sanctions should be taken against Italy. The United Kingdom was an observer when the Committee met earlier this month and accepted the secretariat's advice that sanctions could be lifted permanently.

CITES

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment following the relaxation of border controls within the EC on 1 January, what action he will take to ensure that the United Kingdom does not contravene guidance issued by the EC secretariat of CITES.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* My Department will continue to act upon relevant guidance from the CITES secretariat in Lausanne. I am not aware of any specific guidance directed towards the United Kingdom about the introduction of the single market.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing in each authority and by region *(a)* the number of people and *(b)* the number of households gaining and losing from the introduction of the council tax.

Mr. Howard: I estimate that, before taking account of council tax benefit, some 9 million households in England will be paying less under the council tax than under the community charge.

More households will gain when allowance is made for council tax benefit. At present I expect that, after allowing for council tax benefit, about six out of 10 households will gain. I am placing in the Library tables showing council tax levels and budgets for local authorities in England with community charge and rates comparisons. I will write to the hon. Member shortly giving detailed information on gainers and losers net of council tax benefit by area.

TRANSPORT

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* the ethnic origins and *(b)* women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: A survey was conducted into the ethnic origins of all employees of the Department of Transport and its agencies for whom this information was not already known in October 1992. Surveys into the ethnic origin of new entrants to the Department are conducted every month.

The gender of employees is recorded for all staff on the Department's computerised personnel information system.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Norris: At 24 March 1993 the following numbers and percentages of *(a)* women, *(b)* ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people were employed in the Department of Transport and its agencies.

	(a) Women		*(b) Ethnic Minorities*		*(c) Registered Disabled People*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*[1]	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Grade 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 3	3	9·4	0	0	0	0
Grade 4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 5	8	7·3	1	1·0	0	0
Grade 6	7	4·7	6	4·2	0	0
Grade 7 #	74	9·5	23	3·2	0	0
Overall in the Department	7,144	45·9	731	5·2	202	1·3

[1] Figures show ethnic minority staff as a percentage of those whose ethnic origin is known.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Norris: Recruitment to top grades in the Department of Transport is undertaken on its behalf by the civil service commissioners. Recruits to the senior grades, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including:

- extending links with institutions of higher education;
- equal opportunities training for those involved in selection;
- using validated selection procedures.

Dock Labour

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he takes to monitor the extent of the use of casual employment in former scheme ports after the end of the dock labour scheme and its compliance with the provisions of the Dock Work Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: It is a matter for the port employers to decide what work force they need for their operations. There is no requirement under the Dock Work Act 1989 for information on casual employment to be made available to the Government.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* full-time, *(b)* trained and *(c)* casual dock workers working in each of the former scheme ports in each of the last five years and as of 1 March.

Mr. Norris: Numbers of permanent employed dock workers and cargo handlers, and the number of temporary dock workers, recorded in the annual survey of port manpower carried out by the British Ports Federation, are shown in the table. The figures for permanent employees include others in addition to registered dock workers, and all figures refer to the number of employees in employment on a specified day in March or April each year. The annual survey is no longer carried out, and thus figures are not available for 1 March 1993.

Statistics on numbers of trained employees are not centrally available. It is the responsibility of port employers to ensure that both permanent and temporary staff are adequately trained.

Dockers and Cargo Handlers at Scheme and Ex-Scheme Ports 1989-92

Port	*1989*			*1990*			*1991*			*1992*		
	Permanent dock workers	*Temporary dock workers*	*Total*	*Permanent dock workers*	*Temporary dock workers*	*Total*	*Permanent dock workers*	*Temporary dock workers*	*Total*	*Permanent dock workers*	*Temporary dock workers*	*Total*
London	2,179	0	2,179	1,596	0	1,596	1,245	0	1,245	1,128	0	1,128
Medway	697	2	699	580	64	644	524	47	571	487	8	495
Whitstable	5	0	5	4	1	5	7	0	7	5	12	17
Southampton	1,090	9	1,099	882	9	891	852	22	874	623	7	630
Poole	109	0	109	104	0	104	100	0	100	98	0	98
Plymouth	48	0	48	46	0	46	39	0	39	46	0	46
Fowey	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	0	4	2	0	2
Par	98	0	98	37	0	37	30	0	30	35	0	35
Falmouth	7	0	7	7	0	7	6	0	6	37	0	37
Portland	19	2	21	5	5	10	4	0	4	10	6	16
Charlestown	3	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	3	2	0	2
Truro	5	0	5	5	0	5	4	0	4	4	0	4
Penzance	17	4	21	5	0	5	13	0	13	11	0	11
Newlyn	4	0	4	4	0	4	5	0	5	—	—	—
Bristol	557	0	557	476	0	476	187	0	187	205	0	205
Sharpness and Gloucester	69	14	83	58	0	58	51	0	51	41	0	41
Newport	244	0	244	154	10	164	66	0	66	48	0	48
Cardiff	224	0	224	59	0	59	52	0	52	55	0	55
Barry	116	0	116	95	0	95	91	0	91	90	0	90
Port Talbot	40	0	40	40	0	40	36	0	36	34	0	34
Swansea	129	0	129	40	11	51	40	11	51	103	41	144
Liverpool	1,266	4	1,270	753	5	758	475	6	481	573	17	590
Manchester	338	6	344	237	8	245	179	0	179	150	0	150
Fleetwood	49	0	49	1	0	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Whitehaven	24	0	24	14	0	14	15	0	15	15	0	15
Workington	28	0	28	21	0	21	25	0	25	22	0	22
Silloth	3	3	6	1	0	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Garston	112	0	112	82	3	85	58	4	62	56	0	56
Barrow	14	4	18	14	4	18	13	10	23	16	0	16
Ayr	26	0	26	12	0	12	12	0	12	10	0	10
Clyde	262	0	262	185	9	194	146	0	146	113	0	113
Irvine	3	0	3	6	0	6	6	0	6	3	0	3
Greenock	37	0	37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberdeen	286	0	286	149	34	183	170	37	207	167	19	186
Dundee	113	7	120	58	8	66	53	7	60	25	8	33
Forth	380	0	380	348	0	348	301	0	301	374	0	374
Blyth	88	0	88	48	0	48	57	1	58	42	0	42
Tyne	246	3	249	165	3	168	136	0	136	230	0	230
Sunderland	71	7	78	48	7	55	53	7	60	50	7	57
Seaham	26	0	26	15	0	15	18	0	18	12	0	12
Tees and Hartlepool	702	6	708	617	12	629	497	24	521	457	16	473
Hull	842	60	902	532	121	653	381	121	502	381	110	491
Goole	201	0	201	129	2	131	75	17	92	52	3	55
Grimsby and Immingham	867	50	917	467	60	527	394	66	460	429	65	494
Boston	111	0	111	74	0	74	75	0	75	59	0	59
Wisbech	13	0	13	7	0	7	7	0	7	—	—	—
Kings Lynn	88	0	88	20	0	20	27	1	28	30	0	30
Great Yarmouth	193	5	198	122	9	131	206	9	215	163	9	172
Lowestoft	55	0	55	24	0	24	22	3	25	25	2	27
Ipswich	366	0	366	249	10	259	222	6	228	204	14	218
Total	12,470	186	12,656	8,598	395	8,993	6,982	399	7,381	6,722	344	7,066

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many dock workers were employed at the time of the abolition of the dock labour scheme; what percentage of dock workers have since been made redundant; and what is the total cost of redundancy payments to date.

Mr. Norris: At the time of the abolition of the dock labour scheme there were 9,220 registered dock workers. Of these, 7,074, or 76·7 per cent., subsequently received redundancy payments under the terms of the Dock Work (Compensation Payments Scheme) Regulations 1989. The total cost of these payments has amounted to £231·3 million, of which my Department's contribution was £132 million.

Civil Aviation Authority (Licences)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in relation to any application by a new airline for a licence to fly from a United Kingdom airport or airstrip, (1) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider whether any of the promoters of a new airline have been criticised by any public body on a previous occasion for their stewardship of private or public assets or concerns and to publish their findings in full;

(2) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the appropriateness of the safety precautions available and in use at the particular airport or airstrip, taking specifically into account the population density around the proposed touchdown and takeoff points and to publish their findings and the reasons therefor;

(3) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the extent of studies made by the applicant into the environmental effects of the particular services it proposes to operate and to publish their findings and the reasons therefor;

(4) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the financial backgrounds and reputations of both the operator and its promoters and to publish both their findings and the reasons therefor;

(5) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the extent to which the proposed licensed service is duplicated from the same or nearby airport or airstrip and to publish their findings and the reasons therefor;

(6) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the extent of the studies made by the applicant into the suitability of the particular airport or airstrip for taking off or landing in full or partial darkness, and to publish their findings and the reasons therefor;

(7) he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the maximum load factor for any of the range of aircraft that might be usable under the proposed licence and to publish their findings and the reasons therefor;

(8) he will direct the Civil Aviation Authority to publish full details as supplied to it of any application by a new airline, or by an existing airline to fly from or to a new location in the United Kingdom for a licence for a scheduled service, with effect from 24 March;

(9) if, in relation to any application by a new airline for a licence to fly from a United Kingdom airport or airstrip, he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider the appropriateness of the noise levels of the aircraft proposed to be used for the service to be licensed to the airport or airstrip concerned and to publish their findings and the reasons therefor;

(10) if, in relation to any application by a new airline for a licence to fly from a United Kingdom airport or airstrip, he will request the Civil Aviation Authority to consider whether any of the promoters of a new airline have a criminal record and to publish their findings in full.

Mr. Norris: No. The process of licensing airlines in the United Kingdom is covered by EC Regulation 2407/92 on the licensing of air carriers. This has been implemented in the United Kingdom by the Licensing of Air Carriers Regulations 1992. Any carrier satisfying the requirements laid down is entitled to an operating licence and becomes a Community air carrier. Duly licensed Community air carriers are entitled to virtually unrestricted access to all intra-EC air routes where the airports concerned are open for civil aviation, irrespective of whether a similar service is already available. Where environmental problems exist member states may impose transparent and non-discriminatory restrictions on the operation of particular routes.

There are no routes in the United Kingdom for which the use of this provision has been requested. Such matters as aircraft load limitations, aerodrome safety and aerodrome opening hours are considered by the CAA, but not as part of the licensing process. All aircraft landing or taking off in the United Kingdom have to meet the requirements of the Air Navigation (Noise Certification) Order 1990.

Ferries (Licensing)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the role of his Department in the licensing of scheduled ferries to any destination in balancing demand and provision.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no such role. However, surveyors from the Department's Surveyor General's Organisation carry out surveys on United Kingdom-flagged ferries to ensure compliance with statutory safety standards. Foreign-flagged ferries are also inspected under the port state control arrangements for compliance with international standards.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the difference in journey time for passenger trains between the north of the country and the continent if they are routed to St. Pancras rather than King's Cross.

Mr. Freeman: There is no appreciable difference. Journey times are similar on the rail link routes into St. Pancras and King's Cross, and between the stations and the east coast main line and the west coast main line. All trains have to stop so that officials undertaking on-train border controls can join or depart and for train crews to be changed. No additional time would be taken at St. Pancras as a result of the trains leaving the station in the same direction as they arrive.

Rose Grove to Colne Rail Line

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make finance available to British Rail to allow the track between Rose Grove and Colne in Lancashire to be maintained to a standard which will enable speed restrictions to be lifted.

Mr. Freeman: Decisions on railway maintenance are entirely matters for the management of British Rail. Subsidy is made available to British Rail as a lump sum. It is for British Rail to allocate this money to particular lines and services.

Rail Speed Restrictions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of British Rail track are subject to speed restrictions caused by reduced maintenance resulting from reductions in the public service obligation grant.

Mr. Freeman: PSO grant has not been reduced. £1,150 million is being paid for 1992-93, compared with £900 million for 1991-92 and £600 million for 1990-91.

A66-A1 Intersection

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the feasibility study into a four-way intersection between the A66(M) and the A1(M) will be completed and published.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is no feasibility study being undertaken specifically into a four-way intersection between the A66(M) and the A1(M).

A study to inform the Secretary of State of the longer-term requirements of the A1 (M) between Barton and Birtley will be completed in the near future. An assessment of all the interchanges on this section of motorway is being carried out as part of the study.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department uses in its recommendations for coverage for search and rescue helicopter deployments for *(a)* day time and *(b)* night time.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport uses criteria agreed by the United Kingdom Search and Rescue committee which states that search and rescue helicopters should be deployed so that points 40 nautical miles from the coast can be reached within one hour by day in good weather and those at 100 nautical miles from the coast can be reached within two hours by night or in bad weather.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Missing Giros

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the value is of stolen or missing giro payments from the Department of Social Security for the most recent 12-month period.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of the payment of benefit by girocheque is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will reply to my hon. Friend with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Sir John Wheeler, dated 30 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment, I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what the value is of stolen or missing girocheque payments from the Department of Social Security for the most recent 12 month period.

The most recent period for which figures are available is from April 1991 to March 1992. During this period just over 36 million girocheques were issued by the Department of Social Security of which 86,000 or 0·237% were stolen or missing. Those stolen or missing had a value of £8,156,619.

Additionally, the Employment Service acts as our agent in the issue of girocheques to those who are unemployed and claiming income support. However the Employment Service is not able to separately identify these; the figures cannot therefore be included.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects that Mrs. Ralia J. L. Cox, 1 Ronald place, Ely, Cardiff, NI number ZP 553255D, will receive a copy of her medical records requested on 25 September 1992 in relation to her claim for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Mr. Rhodri Morgan dated 30 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when he expects that Mrs. Ralia J. L. Cox, 1 Ronald Place, Ely, Cardiff, NI Number ZP553255D, will receive a copy of her medical records requested on 25th September 1992 in relation to her claim for disability living allowance.

I understand that the Disability Living Allowance Unit has already written to you separately and in greater detail about this matter on 5 March 1993. I can now confirm that copies of the medical records that are currently available to us were sent to Mrs. Cox on 25 March 1993.

I am sorry for the delay in sending the records to Mrs. Cox. Staff are aware of the need to respond quickly to requests from our customers for such information. You will be aware from Mr. Bichard's letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs of the problems the Benefits Agency has faced since the launch of DLA and the positive steps taken to improve the service to our customers so that we will be able to give the standard of service to which every customer is entitled and which we want to deliver.

I hope that you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Charter Standard Statement

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it cost to produce the charter standard statement recently distributed by the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Benefits Agency charter Standard statement is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 30 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment, I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for

Social Security asking how much it cost to produce the Charter Standard Statement recently distributed by the Benefits Agency.

There have been three hundred and twelve thousand (312,000) copies of the Charter Standard Statement produced and distributed at a cost of £136,273.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Marginal Tax Rates

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *682*, on the numbers of people facing different marginal tax rates, giving an estimate for 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables.

Marginal net income deduction rates including social security.
Numbers with marginal deduction rates at or above each level.
1993-94 Estimates[1]

(000s)

100 per cent.	90 per cent.	80 per cent	70 per cent	60 per cent	50 per cent	40 per cent.
nil	100	215	545	565	565	610

Note: Calculated for benefit units in receipt of income related benefits where at least one partner works 16 hours a week or more. Estimates are cumulative and rounded to the nearest 5,000.

Estimated number of taxpayers liable to income tax above basic rates.
Tax payers liable at higher rate (000s)

Percentage	1990-91	1991-92[2]	1992-93[2]	1993-94[2]
40 per cent	1,700	1,600	1,600	1,600

Notes:
[1] 1992-93 figures based on the 1988, 1989 and 1990 Family Expenditure Surveys.
[2] Provisional estimates projected from the 1990-91 Survey of Personal Income.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the full-year cost of increasing all income-related benefits by *(a)* 2·4 per cent. and *(b)* 1·1 per cent. in 1993-94.

Mr. Burt: The estimated cost is in the table:

Percentage increase in income-related benefits	Cost for all income-related benefits
	£ million
2·4	820
1·1	380

Notes:
Modelled using 1988-89-90 Family Expenditure Survey, uprated to 1993-94 levels of income, prices and benefit rates.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *210*, if he will give similar figures on the effect of levels of the lower and upper profits limits for national insurance contributions on the numbers of contributors and the revenues raised.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the tables.

Table 1

	Average weekly[1] earnings (adults)	Weekly upper[3] profits limit	UPL as a percentage of average earnings	Number of people[4]	Estimated effect on NI revenues[5]
	£	£ (UPL)	Per cent.	Thousands	£ Million
April 1978	78·60	120·00	152·7	—	—
April 1992	304·60	405·00	133·0	150	−100
April 1993	[2]320·00	420·00	131·3	150	−100

Table 2

	Average weekly[1] earnings (adults)	Weekly lower[3] profits limit (LPL)	LPL as a percentage of average earnings	Estimated number[6] of additional contributors	Estimated effect on NI revenues[5]
	£	£	Per cent.	Thousands	£ Million
April 1978	78·60	38·50	49·0	—	—
April 1992	304·60	117·70	38·6	300	+150
April 1993	[2]320·00	121·90	38·1	300	+150

[1] Average weekly full time earnings of all adults. Source: New Earnings Survey.
[2] Assumes a rise in average earnings of 5 per cent. rounded to the nearest £.
[3] The LPL and UPL are annual limits, but for the purpose of comparison with the earlier replies they have been converted into weekly limits.
[4] The estimated number of people with earnings above the UPL but below the level which would have applied had the UPL been increased in line with average earnings since 1978-79.

[5] The estimated effect on NI revenue as a result of increases in the LPL and UPL since 1978-79 by the level of prices rather than earnings.
[6] The estimated additional number of people who pay Class 4 National Insurance contributions as a result of increases in the lower profits limit since 1978-79 by the level of prices rather than earnings.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Child Support Agency will start operations; what its performance targets will be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency, the latest next steps executive agency of the Department of Social Security, will start operations on 5 April 1993, providing a comprehensive child maintenance service. I have set the agency the following performance targets for 1993-94:

60 per cent. of people with care of children making eligible applications to the Agency to have maintenance arranged.

Annual benefit savings—£530 million.

65 per cent. of clients to regard the service as satisfactory.

To manage the Agency's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £115 million.

I have today placed in the Library the agency's framework document, business plan for 1993-94 Child Support Agency charter. I have also placed in the Library the child support manual and field operations guide which will provide the operational guidance used by child support officers and staff.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans there are for the child support adjudication guide to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The child support adjudication guide is being published by HMSO today and copies will be placed in the Library of the House. The guide contains detailed guidance from the chief child support officer on how child support officers should interpret the new laws on maintenance assessments from 5 April. This will be invaluable to child support officers in interpreting the law, but it should also prove useful to outside agencies in providing help and advice to their clients.

The publication of the guidance reflects our commitment to being open about the working of the new child support legislation. In line with the citizen's charter, it represents another move towards greater openness generally in the Department.

Low Incomes

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to provide a response to the Social Security Select Committee second report, "Low Income Statistics: Low Income Families 1979 to 1989".

Mr. Burt: I have today laid before Parliament Command Paper Cm. 2172 which forms the Government response to the Select Committee report.

Departmental Travel Costs

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the total sum spent from his Department's budget on Ministers' travel costs and expenses for travel between Britain and France since April 1992;

(2) what is the total sum spent from his Department's budget on travel costs and expenses *(a)* for foreign travel overall and *(b)* for travel between Britain and France since April 1992.

Mr. Lilley: The sum spent by the Department of Social Security since April 1992 on foreign travel costs is as follows:

(a) Foreign travel costs and expenses overall = £403,600
(b) The travel costs between Britain and France since April 1992 = £26,735

Spending on fares for Ministers' travel between Britain and France amounts to £4,688. Information about related expenses is not readily available.

Smoke Detectors

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what priority is given to battery and mains-operated smoke detectors in relation to applications for community care grants from the social fund for the purchase of essential furnishings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The priority given to any application will depend on the circumstances of each case. A social fund officer has to take account of the general guidance on priorities issued by the Secretary of State and the local guidance issued by the area social fund officer. The guidance helps social fund officers but is not binding; social fund officers must use their discretion and decide each case on its merits. A copy of the Secretary of State's guidance is available in the Library.

In practice, since smoke alarms are usually inexpensive, most applications would fall outside the £30 minimum award for grants.

National Insurance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the proportion of average household income in each region being paid through national insurance contributions in each year from 1978-79 to 1996-97.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The table shows the available information, relating to employees' national insurance contributions as a percentage of household income by region, for the calendar years 1984 to 1990. Regional estimates of household income have not been compiled for years prior to 1984, and estimates for 1991 will be published in the May 1993 issue of "Economic Trends".

National insurance contributions as a percentage of total household income by region

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*
United Kingdom	4·2	4·1	4·0	4·0	4·0	3·6	3·1
North	4·2	4·2	4·1	4·2	4·2	3·8	3·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	4·2	4·2	4·0	4·1	4·1	3·7	3·2
East Midlands	4·4	4·3	4·2	4·2	4·2	3·7	3·2
East Anglia	4·0	4·0	3·8	3·8	3·9	3·4	3·0

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
South East	4·2	4·1	4·0	4·0	3·9	3·5	3·1
of which:							
Greater London	4·3	4·3	4·1	4·1	4·1	3·6	3·2
Rest of South East	4·1	4·0	3·9	3·9	3·8	3·4	3·0
South West	3·8	3·7	3·5	3·6	3·7	3·4	2·9
West Midlands	4·4	4·4	4·2	4·2	4·3	3·8	3·3
North West	4·3	4·2	4·1	4·2	4·2	3·7	3·2
England	4·2	4·1	4·0	4·0	4·0	3·6	3·1
Wales	3·9	4·0	3·9	3·9	4·0	3·5	3·1
Scotland	4·2	4·1	4·0	4·0	4·2	3·7	3·2
Northern Ireland	4·4	4·0	3·8	3·8	3·8	3·2	2·9

Notes:
1. Total household income based on the National Accounts definition of household income.
2. Regional estimates consistent with the data published in the Regional Accounts article in the April 1992 issue of Economic Trends, and the national estimates published in the 1991 Blue Book.
3. Regional breakdown of employees' national insurance contributions based on one per cent. sample of records held by Department of Social Security.

Source: Central Statistical Office.

SCOTLAND

North Ayrshire Hospitals Trust

16. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the ancillary staffing levels of North Ayrshire hospitals trust.

Mr. Stewart: There were 508 ancillary staff in post at 30 September 1992 in the hospitals that will, from 1 April 1993, gain the status of a trust under the North Ayrshire hospitals trust.

Excluded from this total are staff working for contracted-out services.

32. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet Ayrshire and Arran health board to discusss transfer of North Ayrshire hospital to trust status.

Mr. Stewart: Responsibility for the transfer of the North Ayrshire hospitals to the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust is primarily a matter for the trust and Ayrshire and Arran health board. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make the appropriate orders in due course.

Grant-maintained Schools

17. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce grant-maintained schools in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The legislative framework is in place and schools have been encouraged to consider the advantages of self-governing status. At St. Mary's Episcopal primary school, Dunblane the parents voted in favour of self-government status. The school board now has one month to submit proposals to the Secretary of State.

Community Care

18. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of provision for community care for patients with chronic diseases.

Mr. Stewart: The level of provision for community care for patients with chronic diseases will vary for every patient and in all cases will reflect and respond to the needs of the individual. The aim is to secure the most effective package of services that meets the patients' and carers' needs.

Borders Structure Plan

19. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received following the publication of his proposed amendments to the Borders regional structure plan.

Mr. Stewart: By the closing date for representations, my right hon. Friend had received 195 letters commenting on the draft modifications to the Borders regional structure plan.

Committee of the Regions

20. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he plans to make for Scottish representation on the Committee of the Regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government are still considering arrangements for Scottish representation on the Committee of the Regions.

Water Rates (Rural Areas)

21. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to reduce the level of water rates in rural areas.

Sir Hector Monro: The level of water charges is a matter for water authorities. However grants are available under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944 to 1970 to assist capital expenditure by water authorities in rural areas. The effect can be to keep charge levels down.

Public Expenditure

22. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average level of public expenditure per head in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The level of identifiable general Government expenditure per head in Scotland in 1991-92 was £3,506. Identifiable public expenditure comprises expenditure identified as being of direct benefit to Scottish inhabitants. Other expenditure, principally on defence, is of equal

benefit to all the inhabitants of the United Kingdom. That amounted to £716 per head across the United Kingdom in 1991-92.

European Year of Older People

23. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's involvement and participation in the 1993 European Year of Older People; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office is participating fully with other Government Departments and voluntary organisations to plan and promote a wide-ranging programme of events for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity Between Generations. A diary of events taking place in Scotland has been produced and is being added to all the time. Funding to assist with the promotion of the year in Scotland is being made available by the Scottish Office.

Public Bodies (Safeguards)

24. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to give citizens legally enforceable safeguards against the abuse of power by public bodies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have published Scottish charters setting out citizens' rights and entitlements. Some rights, such as the appeals procedures outlined in the parents charter, are statutory. The Housing and Urban Development Bill contains provisions which will strengthen tenants' statutory rights. We have no plans at present to add to these rights.

There are also ordinary remedies available to citizens before the courts and through the various ombudsmen arrangements.

Local Government Reform

25. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of the Touche Ross report on the costs of local government reform.

Mr. Stewart: The sum paid to Touche Ross for its report, the IPF survey of local authorities and subsequent work on the costs of local government reform was £55,000.

29. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact on trading standards and consumer protection departments of his proposals for reorganising local government.

Mr. Stewart: A number of respondents to our recent consultation paper on local government reform have commented on the future of the trading standards service in a single-tier structure. We are giving careful consideration to all these comments.

School Building (Gordon)

26. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit Gordon constituency to examine future school building needs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to visit the Gordon area in connection with school building issues.

Beef Special Premium

27. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he expects to pay to farmers in Scotland under the beef special premium scheme in 1993-94.

Sir Hector Monro: We expect to pay approximately £12·5 million to Scottish farmers under the beef special premium scheme in the financial year 1993-94.

Scottish Government

28. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on his White Paper on "Scotland in the Union".

35. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has received on the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union—a Partnership for Good" (Cm 2225).

Mr. Ian Lang: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion).

30. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in implementing the proposals in his recent White Paper, "Scotland in the Union—a Partnership for Good" (Cm 2225); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Implementation of a number of the proposals contained in the White Paper is already in hand. For example local information points and a public inquiry unit should be operational by the summer; the new oil and gas office will be opened in Aberdeen later this year; preparatory work for the various transfers of responsibility from Whitehall to the Scottish Office is proceeding. As regards parliamentary aspects of the White Paper, proposals for the amendment of Standing Orders will be brought forward in due course.

Inverclyde Enterprise Zones

31. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Inverclyde enterprise zones.

Mr. Stewart: The need for site clearance, servicing and infrastructure works on most of the sites, and the general economic situation, has meant that progress on the zone has been a little slower than we might have hoped. There have also been local difficulties which have contributed to delays in bringing forward sites for development.

Nevertheless, there are extremely encouraging developments on the zone. The proposed development by MIMTEC at Faulds park in particular is expected to create 400 new jobs and bring £20 million of investment to Inverclyde. The zone partners are working, with the Scottish Office, to build on this and earlier successful developments; and to ensure that the zone meets its target of creating 3,200 new jobs in the area.

Water Investment

33. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the continued funding of water investment by public borrowing.

Sir Hector Monro: Under the present administrative arrangements, capital expenditure by water authorities will continue to be subject to public expenditure controls. In addition to the capital consent allocations issued by the Secretary of State, which in effect limit the extent to which authorities may borrow to fund capital expenditure, authorities can augment capital spending by the use of capital receipts and by revenue and private sector contributions. Beyond this, funding arrangements will depend on the future structure of the water and sewerage services, which my right hon. Friend is presently considering.

Health Boards and NHS Trusts

34. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what scrutiny he gives to the curricula vitae of people nominated for health boards and NHS trusts.

Mr. Stewart: The curricula vitae of people nominated for appointment to health boards and NHS trusts receive close scrutiny as they help to identify those likely to be able to contribute to the effective running of the NHS in Scotland.

36. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ancillary workers are employed by *(a)* health boards and *(b)* hospital trusts in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: At 30 September 1992 there were 20,106 ancillary staff representing 13,033 whole-time equivalents employed by health boards in Scotland. National health service trusts in Scotland employed 1,384 ancillary staff representing 938 whole-time equivalents at that date.

Local Government (Employment)

37. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current levels of employment in local government.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 3 March 1993 at column *173*.

Car Theft (Strathclyde)

38. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were convicted for car theft in Strathclyde region during 1992.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1991—the latest year for which data are available—there were 1,220 persons convicted in Strathclyde police force area on a main charge of theft of a motor vehicle.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will place in the Library the assessments made of the likely effectiveness of the paramedic ambulance service before its introduction;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect of the paramedic ambulance service on mortality and morbidity of the patients previously managed by the ambulance service;

(3) what assessments are currently being made of the effectiveness of the paramedic ambulance service; and if they will be made public.

Mr. Stewart: Pre-hospital care is provided by GPs, ambulance staff or hospital outreach teams and research has shown that rapid response by skilled staff to a seriously ill patient enhances recovery and survival. Ambulance staff are generally the first NHS response to patients in an emergency and it was for this reason that training in more advanced lifesaving techniques was introduced to provide a better standard of pre-hospital care for patients.

The Scottish ambulance service has appointed a consultant medical director who is an experienced consultant in accident and emergency medicine. He is responsible for supervising the training arrangements for all extended trained ambulance staff throughout Scotland and for the audit of the outcomes of their interventions in individual cases. Arrangements are in place for measuring the outcome of patients defibrillated by SAS staff. Measuring the outcome of ambulance staff intervention in other types of cases requires link-up with hospital records and and the consultant medical director is involved in identifying the means of linking the ambulance patient report form with the Scottish NHS clinical information systems.

In line with the rest of United Kingdom, records are kept of procedures which paramedics carry out in attending to patients, but these are not as yet linked to outcome. The intention is to measure clinical outcomes as part of quality assurance of ambulance service work. When the systems allow the results will be published.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of ambulance provision in Angus district, for each hospital, in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Ambulance provision to any part of Scotland is not based on the number of hospitals in any particular district. In 1992-93 the annual direct cost of ambulance provision in the Angus area will be £840,000. Information relating to earlier years is not readily available.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra ambulance provision is planned as a consequence of Tayside health board's acute services review.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Until the board has made a decision on the future of acute services in the area it is not possible to determine what changes might be required to the ambulance service.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many single and double-manned ambulances are currently available in Angus district.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* There are eight double-manned and two single-manned accident and emergency ambulances and seven single-manned non-emergency patient transport vehicles.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place with Tayside health board on the subject of ambulance services in connection with Tayside health board's acute services review.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Officials from the Scottish Office Home and Health Department, Tayside health board and the Scottish ambulance service met on 10 February to discuss the impact on ambulance services in Angus of the options set out in the board's consultation document on its review of acute services.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ambulances and ambulance crews are currently available in Angus district; and what were the comparable figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* There are currently 17 ambulances and 35 ambulance staff serving the Angus area. Staffing levels have increased by 30 per cent. since 1991. Other information over the past five years is not readily available.

Angus Hospitals

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the value of bequests attached to each Angus hospital.

Mr. Stewart: The information available from the 1991-92 endowment fund report from Tayside health board shows the value of endowments at 31 March 1992 for Angus hospitals, which includes donations, bequests, endowments and revenue from endowments is as follows:

Hospital	*Amount (£)*
Arbroath Infirmary	19,522
Rosemount Day Hospital	593
Brechin Infirmary	1,283
Forfar Infirmary	10,823
Fyfe Jamieson	764
Little Cairne	9,775
Montrose Royal Infirmary	15,389
Stracathro	41,124
Sunnyside Royal	8,903
Whitehills Hospital	3,019
Total	111,195

In addition to these endowments, £5,044 is held for community care units provided by the health board in the Angus area and a further £1,269,252 is held in a general fund not associated with particular hospitals.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the percentage of admissions to acute beds that are *(a)* elective and *(b)* emergency.

Mr. Stewart: The table shows discharges in 1991, the latest year for which figures are available, from Scottish NHS hospitals by type of admmission and health board area within which treatment was received.

Health Board of Treatment	*Admission Type Elective per cent.*	*Emergency per cent.*
Argyll and Clyde	46·0	48·3
Ayrshire and Arran	51·1	42·9
Borders	40·1	51·6
Dumfries and Galloway	43·6	45·1
Fife	52·5	38·7
Forth Valley	53·9	40·8
Grampian	46·1	43·2
Greater Glasgow	52·8	35·8
Highland	49·8	42·8
Lanarkshire	43·7	46·5
Lothian	47·9	40·7
Orkney	42·5	53·5
Shetland	54·0	44·1
Tayside	45·2	43·7
Western Isles	44·4	51·8
Scotland	48·7	51·6

Inter-hospital transfers are not included.

Psychiatric Beds

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many psychiatric beds are projected to close in each Scottish health board in each of the next nine years.

Mr. Stewart: Health boards are constantly reviewing their assessment of need and as a consequence no figures for future years are available. It remains the case that every admission to and discharge from hospital is based on individual clinical assessment.

Electoral Rolls

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total electorate in each parliamentary constituency in Scotland as at 16 February.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total electorate for each parliamentary constituency in Scotland, as at 16 February 1993, is as follows:

Parliamentary Electors: 1993 Register: by constituency (alphabetical order)

Constituency	*Total*
SCOTLAND	3,931,429
Aberdeen North	60,242
Aberdeen South	59,389
Angus East	64,223
Argyll and Bute	48,995
Ayr	66,495
Banff and Buchan	66,721
Caithness and Sutherland	31,113
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	55,821
Central Fife	56,491
Clackmannan	49,538
Clydebank and Milngavie	47,900
Clydesdale	62,978
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	47,422
Cunninghame North	55,564
Cunninghame South	49,644
Dumbarton	57,525
Dumfries	61,876
Dundee East	58,570
Dundee West	59,624
Dunfermline East	50,700
Dunfermline West	51,713
East Kilbride	65,051
East Lothian	67,541
Eastwood	64,506
Edinburgh Central	57,127
Edinburgh East	45,779
Edinburgh Leith	56,662
Edinburgh Pentlands	56,171
Edinburgh South	62,330
Edinburgh West	59,331
Falkirk East	52,550
Falkirk West	50,220
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	55,074
Glasgow Cathcart	44,623
Glasgow Central	47,963
Glasgow Garscadden	40,975
Glasgow Govan	45,629
Glasgow Hillhead	57,524
Glasgow Maryhill	48,109

Constituency	Total
Glasgow Pollok	45,786
Glasgow Provan	36,625
Glasgow Rutherglen	52,903
Glasgow Shettleston	52,263
Glasgow Springburn	46,016
Gordon	82,654
Greenock and Port Glasgow	52,185
Hamilton	62,364
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	70,955
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	62,638
Kincardine and Deeside	68,218
Kirkcaldy	52,322
Linlithgow	61,884
Livingston	61,905
Midlothian	60,831
Monklands East	49,041
Monklands West	49,903
Moray	64,592
Motherwell North	57,955
Motherwell South	50,327
North East Fife	55,657
North Tayside	57,135
Orkney and Shetland	32,052
Paisley North	46,491
Paisley South	47,937
Perth and Kinross	66,672
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	59,430
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	56,967
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	44,201
Stirling	58,786
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	61,678
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	40,220
Western Isles	23,127

Local Enterprise Companies

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what ways the eligibility, financial and operating rules which apply to coal enterprise companies in Scotland differ from those outlined in the 1993-94 training and enterprise council operating agreement for *(a)* youth training and training credits, *(b)* training for work and *(c)* business start-up allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The rules which govern the delivery by local enterprise companies in Scotland of the principal Government-funded training and enterprise programmes for 1993-94 are set out in an operating agreement between Scottish Enterprise/Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies which follows closely that for training and enterprise councils.

Badger Setts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of badger setts, by county, closed or otherwise, seriously interfered with by or under licence from his Department's officials in each month from October 1991.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is as follows:

Month	Number of setts	District council area
November 1992	2	Clydesdale
		Moray
January 1993	1	Nairn

Fisheries Protection Agency

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about performance targets for the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency for 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: For the financial year 1993-94 I have set the following targets:

	Target
Aerial surveillance—per cent. of hours flown on task	85
Aerial surveillance—cost per aircraft sighting (£)	95
Marine surveillance—number of boardings at sea	2,500
Marine surveillance—cost per boarding (£)	2,625
Sea Fisheries Inspectorate—cost per log sheet check (£)	57
50 per cent. of cases for prosecution to be reported within six weeks of offence being detected and 90 per cent. within eight weeks	
Number of cases where court proceedings are taken as percentage of offences reported to prosecuting authorities (per cent.)	75

In order to ensure that the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency uses its resources efficiently, I have set it a target to achieve cash releasing efficiency gains of 1½ per cent. over 1992-93.

The chief executive will be directly accountable to me for the achievement of these targets, which will be reported in the agency's annual report.

Prison Service

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what targets he will set the Scottish prison service on achieving executive agency status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have decided that, under the next steps initiative, the Scottish prison service will become an executive agency on 1 April 1993. I am arranging for copies of the framework document to be placed in the Vote Office and in the Libraries of the House. I shall remain accountable to Parliament for the activities of the Scottish prison service. I am delegating to the chief executive full managerial authority for the agency and its day-to-day operation. For the future I envisage greater flexibilities to help the Scottish prison service meet increasingly demanding targets and further improve its standards of service.

I have set the following key performance targets for the Scottish prison service for 1993-94:

	Target
1. The number of prisoners unlawfully at large.	1. No 'A' category prisoners should escape. 2. The number of escapes by 'B' category prisoners should not be higher than 2·5 per 1,000 prisoners
2. The number of significant incidents.	A database will be devloped and a target set from 1994-95.

	Target
3. The number of serious assaults on staff and prisoners.	1. The number of serious assaults on staff should not be higher than 6 per 1,000 staff. 2. The number of serious assaults on prisoners should not be higher than 11 per 1,000 prisoners.
4. Basic quality of life for prisoners.	By April 1994 52 per cent. of prisoners will have access to forms of night sanitation.
5. The amount of available opportunities for prisoners' self development.	That 80 per cent. of convicted prisoners should have the opportunity of at least 6·5 hours per working day of programmed activities.
6. Time out of cell for unconvicted prisoners.	On average 25 per cent. of unconvicted prisoner hours should be available for out of cell activities.
7. Average annual cost per prisoner place.	To keep costs within £26,170 per place available for use.
8. The level of absence through staff sickness.	To reduce the average number of days lost per person per year through staff sickness to 16.

School Management

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about devolved school management.

Mr. Lang: When I launched the draft guidelines for consultation in November, I said that I believed that devolving the management of schools as far as possible to the schools themselves would provide new opportunities to improve the quality of the education our children receive. I also said then that no single scheme could cover the diversity of our schools and regional differences and that that was why I was asking education authorities to devise their own schemes to suit the particular schools and the particular circumstances in their areas.

We received well over 1,000 responses during and just after the consultation period. I am grateful to all those who responded and also to those who gave of their time to attend the working group which was set up following a suggestion in the consultation paper and which met on three occasions to consider in detail the workings of the new arrangements.

Having carefully considered the responses made and the very helpful and constructive suggestions put, we have clarified and revised the guidelines in a number of important respects. In particular, we have recognised the concerns of many about the very tight timescale under which implementation is to proceed. That is why we have extended to end September 1993 the period within which education authorities are to submit draft schemes and why we have extended to 1 April 1997 the period in which devolved school management is to be introduced in special schools. Devolved management is still to be introduced in all primary and secondary schools by 1 April 1996.

We have also extended the number of categories which need not require to be devolved to school level to include, for example, home-to-school transport, school meals and milk and, importantly, provision for special educational needs. These measures will safeguard resources in these special areas which are pupil-led rather than school led. And we have also recognised the concerns of many school boards by building greater flexibility into the arrangements for consultation with head teachers on spending decisions and participation in arrangements for school staff appointments.

I have said all along that the arrangements for devolved school management must build on the strengths of our education system. To do so most effectively they will require to forge an even stronger partnership between education authorities, head teachers, school boards, school staff, parents and pupils. That can only be to the benefit of all.

Experience here and abroad shows conclusively that there are real benefits to be gained by devolving responsibility for day-to-day decisions down to school level. Not only is each school better able to judge its own priorities, but each education authority is also free to concentrate on the important tasks of strategic planning, quality assurance and in providing an enabling and support role for its schools. That is why I look to all sides to make the new arrangements work for the benefit of our children's education and the education of our children's children.

Registers of Scotland

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the targets he expects the Registers of Scotland to achieve in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: I have set the registers of Scotland the following key targets for 1993-94:

to reduce turnround times for recording writs on the Sasines Register from 10 to 8 weeks.

to reduce turnround times for dealings on the Land Register not attached to a First Registration or Transfer of Part from 15·5 to 12 weeks.

to implement the agreed Land Register extension programme.

to reduce unit costs in real terms for each of its main categories of work by 2 per cent.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in applying the next steps management approach to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State has now agreed a management statement with the council. This is an important part of the application of the next steps approach to executive non-departmental public bodies. The management statement describes the council's aims and objectives and their relationship with the Secretary of State and provides the broad policy and managerial framework within which the council will operate. A copy of the management statement has been placed in the Library.

Cash Limits

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits for 1992-93 to class XV, vote 12.

Mr. Lang: I intend to decrease the cash limit for class XV, vote 12: law, order, miscellaneous health and social work services, Scotland by £312,000 from £249,628,000 to £249,316,000. This is required due to increased expenditure on class XV, vote 10: police grant, legal aid, criminal injuries compensation and welfare food, Scotland which will be contained within the planning total.

Agricultural Science Agency

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the performance of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency against its targets for 1992-93 and the setting of targets for 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: The agency has very largely achieved the key performance targets for 1992-93, the first year of its operation, which I set out in my answer of 9 March 1992 at column *397*.

For 1993-94 I have set the agency the following key performance targets.

completion of 95 per cent. of all scientific tests and analyses within the timescale set by the customers;
evaluation of quality assurance schemes for all major services leading to candidature for accreditation during 1994-95;
improvement of the quantitative indices of performance of the Agency (ie its unit costs) by at least 1·5 per cent.;
recovery of full economic costs for charged services;
formal consultation of the views of all customers on the quality of the work done by the Agency in 1993-94;
completion of the first annual cycle of the accruals accounting system developed in 1992-93.

Scottish Record Office

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about his plans to establish the Scottish Record Office as a next steps agency.

Mr. Lang: I informed the House on 5 February that the Scottish Record Office was to be established as a next steps agency. It is to be launched as an agency on 1 April.

I have set the Scottish Record Office the following key targets for its first year of operation:

Efficiency
to reduce the unit cost of preserving and making available the records of Scotland by 8 per cent.;
Quality of Service
to increase the number of catalogue pages available for public scrutiny on the electronic system from 24,600 in 1992-93 to 30,740 in 1993-94;
to maintain the recently achieved standards of reader services: material produced for readers in 30 minutes or less in 90 per cent. of cases,
90 per cent. of photocopying for legal customers produced in 24 hours,
95 per cent. of correspondence dealt with in 10 days,
while absorbing an expected 2 per cent. increase in demand.
Effectiveness
to survey the electronic and paper based information systems as a first step towards agreeing standards for the transfer of electronic records to the SRO.

The Keeper of the Records of Scotland as the agency's chief executive will be directly accountable to me for the agency's achievements.

I have placed a copy of the agency's framework document in the Libraries of both Houses.

Superannuation Division

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement about establishing the Scottish Office superannuation division as an executive agency.

Mr. Lang: As I announced on 20 November 1992 the Scottish Office superannuation division will become an executive agency on 1 April. Its main role is to administer the occupational pension schemes covering the national health service and the teaching service in Scotland, on my behalf, and to advise me on the regulation of these schemes and other superannuation schemes for which I am responsible. The agency will be known as the Scottish Office Pensions Agency (SOPA) and will continue to be part of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

For 1993-94, the first year of its operation, I have set the following key targets for the agency:

1. To complete by August 1993 an exercise to verify the accuracy and completeness of the computer based members' records.
2. To develop an improved system for measuring customer satisfaction.
3. To ensure that awards and transfer payments are accurate to within 2 per cent. of their value in 97 per cent. of cases.
4. To pay on time 99 per cent. of all pensions and lump sums where the target date for receipt of claims is met.
5. To respond to all enquiries within 3 weeks.
6. To progress specification, procurement and implementation of new integrated IT systems to completion of tender evaluation stage.
7. To optimise use of budgetary provision while keeping within direct running costs limits.
8. To provide policy advice which is consistent with public service pension policy and takes account of operational objectives of Scottish Office departments, within the required timescales.

Community Midwives

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the qualifications and training required for a local community midwife.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* A local community midwife must have the appropriate professional qualifications required by section 11 of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979, as amended, for admission to part 10 of the register maintained by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC). In addition under the council's rules regulating the practice of midwives, registered midwives are required to attend courses of instruction from time to time in accordance with these rules.

Local Government Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress in the current review of the boundaries of local government electoral areas, stating whether public inquiries can still be held and whether there will be future opportunities for making representations to the appropriate authorities before final decisions are taken.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* To date my right hon. Friend has received reports from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland for the three islands councils

and all regional councils other than Strathclyde. The Commission has recently commenced its programme of reviews of the 53 district councils.

No further public inquiries can be held for the islands and regions. However, in the case of the districts, where the reviews are in progress, the commission will publish in the local press the time limits for lodging of representations and details of any public inquiries to be held. When the commission submits its reports to the Secretary of State there is a further opportunity for representations to be made about the commission's final recommendations.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Cumbernauld development corporation on the line of route for the M80 extension between Stepps and Haggs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Discussions have taken place with Cumbernauld development corporation over a number of years on the line of route for the M80 extension. A formal presention of the road proposals was made to members and officials in August 1992 and shortly afterwards the corporation expressed its strong support for the route through the Kelvin valley.

Legal Aid

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations he has received from the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland concerning the proposed changes to the contributary schemes for legal aid and legal advice and assistance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland concerning the proposed changes to the eligibility criteria for legal aid and legal advice and assistance; and if he will make a statement;

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The social work commissioner of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland wrote to the Scottish Office Home and Health Department on 15 March about the effect on the mentally disordered of the Government's proposed changes in eligibility for civil legal aid and advice and assistance.

The Government's intention is to ensure, in the face of considerable rises in expenditure on legal aid, that legal aid will continue to be available to the most needy. The financial circumstances of mentally disordered people will vary considerably, but it is likely that the great majority will remain eligible for civil legal aid or advice and assistance, either free of charge or with an income-related contribution.

NHS Pay Review

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made towards the pay review for national health service workers due to take effect on 1 April; and if he will make a statement of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the review.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The Government's policy on pay in the public sector including the national health service was set out in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement in the House on 12 November 1992.

Doctors and dentists have accepted an offer of a 1·5 per cent. increase in pay and allowances with effect from 1 April 1993. Representatives of all other staff groups except clinical scientists, clinical psychologists and pharmacists are consulting their members about similar offers. Staff representatives are aware that these are final offers.

Smoke Alarms

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Paisley, south, (Mr. McMaster) on 19 January, *Official Report,* column *238,* if he will bring forward regulations to require smoke alarms to be fitted to existing dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Under the Building (Scotland) Act 1959, building control operates on the principle that a warrant must be obtained before work is carried out. The Building Standards Regulations and the technical standards which support them cannot therefore be applied retrospectively. Under amendments to the regulations and standards which my right hon. Friend intends shortly to lay before Parliament the fitting of mains-operated smoke alarms will become compulsory in all new dwellings.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 1 April 1993

DEFENCE

Royal Navy Personnel

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to reach further conclusions about personnel numbers in the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As foreshadowed in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *800*, I can now confirm that, in the light of the overall reductions required in the Royal Navy, a third phase of Royal Navy redundancies will be necessary in 1994. The maximum overall number is likely to be of the order of 2,300, but further work is needed to determine precise numbers. Detailed terms will be promulgated within the Navy in the summer. We will be encouraging the maximum number of volunteers although some compulsory measures may be needed in order to achieve the proper balance of manpower within the Royal Navy.

Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *16*, on what criteria tenders for the amphibious helicopter carrier will be evaluated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We will hold a full and fair competition for the contract, using our normal technical and value-for-money criteria. We expect to be in a position to award a contract for the amphibious helicopter carrier later this year.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *16*, what decision has been taken on the award of a contract to build the amphibious helicopter carrier; and on what grounds that decision was taken.

Mr. Aitken: No decision has yet been taken on the choice of contractor to build the amphibious helicopter carrier. We expect to be in a position to award the contract later this year, after a full and fair competition using our normal technical and value-for-money criteria.

Married Quarters

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long married personnel will be allowed to remain in married quarters in *(a)* overseas postings and *(b)* the United Kingdom following the termination of their service with the armed services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All married service personnel in the United Kingdom and overseas are required to vacate their quarters on the day of their discharge. They are, however, given six months advance warning to vacate their quarter as part of the resettlement procedure. Married service personnel overseas are given the opportunity to move to a quarter in the United Kingdom for the last six months of their service to enable them to look for alternative accommodation. The Ministry of Defence is sympathetic to the needs of ex-service families who face homelessness; in these circumstances ex-service personnel may be allowed to remain in their quarter until they have found alternative accommodation, as long as there are no pressing service requirements for the property.

EUCLID

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on EUCLID; what is the breakdown of the expenditure; what evaluation of the quality need and effectiveness of these programmes is undertaken; and by whom.

Mr. Aitken: To date, about £160,000 has been spent extramurally on two contracts on interconnection and assembly of microelectronics and solid state laser sources. The quality, need and effectiveness of these programmes are evaluated by the defence staff in consultation with their scientific advisers.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The potential scope of the initiative will vary between departments. My Department is examining the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December 1992, and the further published guidance on contract energy management—17 February 1993—and joint ventures—16 March 1993. I also refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *362*.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are made for the staff in his Department to carry out routine exercises to evaluate their guidelines for dealing with an accident involving the transportation of nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Regular exercises of varying scale are sponsored by the Ministry of Defence to enable departmental and other staffs to practise the response to a nuclear transport accident.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for contacting local authorities when nuclear weapons convoys travel through their area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Local civil police forces are always notified at least 24 hours in advance of nuclear

weapon convoy movements through their area of responsibility. It is the accepted practice nationally that the civil police will co-ordinate the response of the other emergency services to all serious incidents and they would fulfil this same role in the event of an accident involving a nuclear weapon convoy.

Aldermaston

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many companies submitted bids to take over the running of the Aldermaston nuclear weapons plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Three companies submitted bids for the contract to operate the atomic weapons establishment, which includes the Aldermaston site.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedure was followed in appointing a company to take over the running of the Aldermaston nuclear weapons plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Comprehensive competitive tendering procedures were followed in selecting the contractor to operate the atomic weapons establishment, which includes the Aldermaston site.

Surplus Weapons

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the sale of surplus weapons.

Mr. Aitken: As the Comptroller and Auditor General noted in the recent National Audit Office report on disposal by sale of defence surplus equipment and stores —HC 557—my Department has made good progress in establishing a unified organisation for disposal by sale. We are pursuing joint venture schemes with industry, aimed at tackling the exceptional disposal activity necessary in the next few years, which is on a scale unprecedented since the end of the second world war.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Aitken: MOD recruitment into the fast stream is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services agency—RAS—on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners. RAS has put in place a range of measures to aid the recruitment of minority groups. The principle of fair and open competition continues to apply, including the commitment to equal opportunities. The Department is considering with the Windsor Fellowship the possibility of sponsoring students of ethnic minority origin at the pre-recruitment stage for fast-stream entry. Consistent with departmental action programmes for women, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, we have indicated to RAS our willingness to take fast-stream entrants from minority groups, and new recruits from all three groups have joined the Department in recent years.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Ethnic monitoring of all civilian staff was introduced in 1988 as an important element of our equal opportunities policies. A further survey of all staff who did not reply to the initial survey was conducted in March 1991 and resulted in an improved response rate. Ethnic monitoring is a continuous process in the MOD, and all new entrants, except casual staff, are surveyed on joining. The information to establish the number of women employed in the Department is readily available from employment records; surveys to establish gender are therefore unnecessary.

Global Positioning System

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from his United States counterpart on the Pentagon's new global positioning system; and what are the implications for British defence plans of the deployment of the GPS by the United States of America.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our forces have already made use of the global positioning system, and our use of this navigation aid is planned to increase as GPS receivers are fitted to a wider range of equipment. Under arrangements we have with the United States, there is regular consultation between officials about the system.

Ammunition Manufacture

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress made in the five-year supply tenders for ammunition manufacture announced in February.

Mr. Aitken: Tenders have been issued and are due for return at the end of April.

Exercise Team Spirit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations have been received by Her Majesty's Government in regard to the security implications for the Korean peninsula of the Team Spirit military exercise.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have received a small number of inquiries about Exercise Team Spirit.

Trident

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress made in testing the sonar system for the new Trident submarines.

Mr. Aitken: The sonar system was tested and cleared for the support of Vanguard's contractor's sea trials, and met Vanguard's requirements adequately. The system will undergo further comprehensive testing following Vanguard's acceptance into the Royal Navy later this year.

Management Consultants

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the management consultants employed by his Department in the last five years, indicating in each case the cost of the contract.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is not held centrally and could not be compiled without disproportionate cost and effort.

Market Testing

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which professional services within his Department have been subjected to market testing within the last 12 months and with what result; and which will be subjected to market testing within the next 12 months.

Mr. Aitken: Functions involving professional staff that have been market tested in the past 12 months include:

elementary flying training;
helicopter maintenance and engineering support;
works service management at various locations;
engineering and supply services at RAF Scampton;
management and operation of AWE Aldermaston; and
aircraft support services at A&AEE Boscombe Down.

All except Boscombe Down resulted in the work being contractorised.

In the next 12 months we expect to market test:

spearfish torpedo in-service support;
information technology services;
armoured vehicle repair and refitting;
graphics and photography.

Bounties and Bonuses

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the principle that governs the payment of bonuses or bounties to members of the security forces; from what fund bounties or bonuses are paid to the security forces; and who determines the circumstances in which bonuses are paid to members of the security forces;

(2) how many bonuses have been paid to troops in the Province for reported sightings of *(a)* republican terrorist suspects and *(b)* loyalist terrorist suspects.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only bounties or bonuses payable from public funds to soldiers in Northern Ireland are those relating to such matters as completion of periods of service or, in the case of the Royal Irish Regiment, home service part time, completion of annual attendance and training requirements. The authority for such payments is contained in the pay warrant and supporting regulations.

No payments have been made from public funds to soldiers in Northern Ireland for sightings of suspected terrorists. Local initiatives to make such incentive payments from non-public funds during the first quarter of 1993 have been terminated. There was only one award for a reported sighting, of a suspected "loyalist" terrorist.

Faslane (Security)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set up an inquiry into the disclosure of detailed plans of the Clyde submarine base at Faslane to the *Glasgow Evening Times*; if he will review his policy of employing private security firms to protect top security installations like Faslane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* The plans that have come into the hands of the *Glasgow Evening Times* are not classified and do not relate to any sensitive parts of the Clyde submarine base. Commercial security companies are not used to guard MOD operational or other sensitive installations. There is no reason to review this policy.

Housing

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will revise the upper price limit which the Housing Corporation has set on qualifying properties for the do-it-yourself shared ownership scheme.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 31 March 1993]:* It is the responsibility of the Housing Corporation, with the approval of the Department of the Environment, to set qualifying limits for DIYSO properties. I understand that new DIYSO value limits have been agreed, and will be introduced from 1 April 1993. Qualifying limits vary according to the type of house and area. These limits will enable the DIYSO programme to expand by making it available to first-time buyers who require family housing.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Curry: We have carried out a wide-ranging exercise to inform senior budget holders within the Department of the initiative and to determine the potential for the expansion of the use of private finance in the department's programmes. As the Department's capital programmes are modest, scope for the involvement of private finance is limited. We are, however, continuing to keep this initiative under regular review.

Live Animal Transport

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number, by animal type, of live animals transported overseas for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Curry: Details, by type, of the number of live animals exported can be found for the years 1988 to 1991 in the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics" for the United Kingdom, while those for 1992 can be found in the December 1992 issue of the monthly version of the same publication. Copies of these publications are in the House of Commons Library. Details of live animal classification within SITC 00 are shown in the "Guide to Classification for Overseas Trade Statistics", which is also in the House of Commons Library.

Group Marketing Grant

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the outcome of his review of the group marketing grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We have today introduced a more accessible and user-friendly scheme in the light of the first year's experience and the comments received in a recent consultation exercise. The proposed changes were warmly welcomed by the industry. Copies of the new scheme have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Oil Dispersants

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to review his Ministry's system for testing and appraisal of oil dispersants for use at sea.

Mr. Curry: Our current arrangements for the testing and approval of dispersants for use on oil spilt at sea have been in place for a number of years. I have decided to review them. I shall be considering, in particular the standards against which dispersants are assessed for toxicity, efficiency and other aspects of performance; whether any changes are needed in the procedures for issuing approvals; the adequacy of information publicly available about the composition of dispersants.

In addition, together with other relevant Ministers, and with the advice of the marine pollution control unit and the Warren Spring Laboratory, I will take account of the circumstances in which the use of chemical dispersants is likely to remain the most effective way to protect the environment from oil spilt at sea.

My review will take into account any lessons learned from incidents in which dispersants have been used, and of the findings of the ecological steering group set up following the Braer incident by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and of Lord Donaldson's inquiry.

I will consult widely during the conduct of the review.

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what decisions have been taken about the future status, funding and operation of the Agricultural Training Board following the consultation exercise that took place last month.

Mr. Gummer: The consultation exercise generated a very high level of response. The important role played by training groups was highlighted, but there was some criticism of the current ATB operational structure. Overall, there was no clear consensus in the comments received in favour of the package of changes proposed or continuing with the current arrangements. Nevertheless, it was apparent from the comments that some further restructuring and rationalisation of the ATB would be appropriate. In the longer term, I consider that the industry's training needs could be best serviced by an industry training organisation—ITO—that is independent of government. However, there remain a number of issues to be resolved before I can confirm details of the changes. I will make a further announcement in due course.

Government funding from MAFF will reduce to £2·6 million per year and will in future be directed primarily towards core ITO activities. These include the identification of training needs, developing and setting standards and the promotion of training within the industry. In addition, some funding will be directed towards local training support activities. There will be some scope to vary these arrangments in different parts of the country to meet specific local needs. It will be for the ATB board to take decisions on the future structure of the ATB and the nature of any local representational arrangements in the light of the Government and commercial funding available to it.

Trichlorphon

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take measures to ban the use of the pesticide trichlorphon.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to ban trichlorphon.

Sheep Dips

Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received the advice of the Veterinary Products Committee on his request as to whether a moratorium on organophosphorous sheep dips would be appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Following my meeting with a parliamentary delegation on 16 February, I asked the Veterinary Products Committee for advice on whether it would be prudent, in the light of the evidence currently available, to have a moratorium on organophosphorous sheep dips until its current review of these products is complete. I have now received the following advice from the Committee:

"ORGANOPHOSPHOROUS SHEEP DIPS: VPC ADVICE

1. At its meeting on 25 March the Veterinary Products Committee considered the Minister's request for advice on whether it would be prudent in the light of the evidence currently available to have a moratorium on organophosphorous (OP) sheep dips until its current review of these products is complete. For this meeting the Committee was joined by Peter Blain, Professor in Environmental Medicine at Newcastle University Medical School, Miss P Casey of the National Poisons Information Service (Birmingham Centre), and Dr. G D'Mello and Mr. D Swanston, consultant toxicologists, acting as expert consultants and participating fully in the Committee's deliberations.

2. The Committee received the papers listed in the attached annex, saw photographs of the severe effects of sheep scab and myiasis (blowfly strike) in sheep, and heard presentations from the South West Environmental Protection Agency, the National Poisons Information Service (Guy's Hospital London Centre), the National Office of Animal Health, the Institute of Occupational Medicine at Edinburgh and the Health and Safety Executive.

3. The Committee were advised that unless preventive measures were taken to combat myiasis and sheep scab, these distressing and potentially fatal diseases could cause severe welfare problems in sheep. The Committee were also advised that it is the responsibility of farmers to safeguard the welfare of their animals. Concern was expressed about recent reports of the increased incidence of sheep scab and its potential for spread, bearing in mind the contagious nature of the infestation. The current incidence of myiasis in United Kingdom flocks also gave cause for concern.

4. The Committee noted:

reports alleging adverse health effects in humans arising from the use of OP sheep dips;

evidence that exposure to OP compounds during dipping was greatly reduced if the correct protective clothing was worn and correct dipping practices followed;

that further research was in progress to assess the long term implications for human health from OP dip use;

that some alternative products to OP dips were currently available for the prevention and treatment of sheep scab and myiasis, but insufficient quantities would be available for the (non statutory) 1993 summer dipping season;

that if sheep scab and myiasis were left untreated serious animal welfare problems would ensue causing

the deaths of many sheep;

that sheep dip could cause environmental harm if disposed of incorrectly.

5. After careful consideration of all the evidence available to it, the Committee advises that OP sheep dips should continue to be available for the 1993 summer dip but that the future licensing of these products should reconsidered at its October 1993 meeting when it would wish to conclude its current review on the basis of the further data currently being generated.

6. In the light of evidence of poor use of protective clothing and incorrect dipping practices however, the Committee recommends that the following action be taken:

the potential hazards arising from the misuse of these products should be re-emphasised;

clear advice should be made available from dip manufacturers and suppliers of clothing on the types of personal protective equipment which should be used when working with OP sheep dips;

hazard symbols should be included on product labels, and hazard warnings and instructions to users should be standardised;

users of sheep dips should be strongly encouraged to obtain a certificate of competence in the safe use of veterinary medicines, recently introduced by the National Proficiency Tests Council;

HSE efforts to ensure that sheep dips are used safely should be endorsed;

the continued reporting of suspected human adverse reactions to these products should be encouraged;

7. The Committee also recommends that:

consideration should be given to the siting of new dipping facilities, and the associated plans for dip disposal, being subject to planning controls with the regulatory water organisations as statutory consultees;

better statistics on the actual usage of individual sheep dip products should be requested from the veterinary pharmaceutical industry.

PAPERS CONSIDERED CONCERNING SHEEP DIPS

(a) Published Papers

Report of National Poisons Unit survey of exposure to sheep dip (1991).

Veterinary Medicines Directorate/Health and Safety Executive guidance leaflets on safe handling and disposal of sheep dips and Control of Substances Hazardous to Health requirements.

National Office of Animal Health leaflet on Organophosphorus Sheep Dips (November 1992).

National Proficiency Tests Council, "Certificates of Competence in the Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines" (1993).

Report on toxic chemicals in agriculture (Zuckerman Report)—1951 (HMSO).

Chronic painters' syndrome, P. Arlien-Soborg et al, in Acta neurol. scandinav., 60 (1979).

(b) Preliminary Papers intended for future publication by their authors

Report of consideration of suspected adverse reactions by the Appraisal Panel for Human Suspected Adverse Reactions to Veterinary Medicines.

Preliminary report from the Institute of Occupational Medicine on an assessment of occupational hygiene and exposure to insecticides and the effectiveness of protective clothing during sheep dipping operations.

Preliminary results of a study of the electrophysiological changes in the neuromuscular system and biochemical effects of a single dose of organophosphate in the mouse by S. S. Kelly, E. Mutch, F. M. Williams and P. G. Blain.

Draft results of a study of peripheral nerve dysfunction in farmers using sheep dip, undertaken by Dr. G. A. Jamal and others.

(c) VPC Papers available to enquirers

Summary of existing scientific literature on long-term effects of organophosphorus compounds in humans.

Summary of current research into organophosphorus compounds.

Paper on disposal of sheep dips.

A paper on product labels: operator and environmental warnings.

Summary of suspected human adverse reaction reports received by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Text of presentation made by Mrs. E. Sigmund, South West Environmental Protection Agency.

Summary of presentation made by the Institute of Occupational Medicine, Edinburgh.

A simplified overview of the spectrum of efficacy of sheep ectoparasiticides used in the United Kingdom.

(d) VPC papers containing confidential information

Details of products currently licensed as ectoparasiticides for sheep.

Evaluation of toxicity data and estimation of consumer risk for:

—Chlorfenvinphos

—Diazinon

—Propetamphos

Data on impurities present in diazinon, chlorfenvinphos and propetamphos used in the manufacture of sheep dips.

Data on residues in fleece and lanolin and problems for the woollen industry."

I have accepted this advice and my officials are now discussing with representatives of the veterinary pharmaceutical industry, the companies concerned and other interested parties the arrangements for the urgent implementation of the committee's recommendations.

I am grateful to the committee for the full and careful consideration it has given to these difficult issues, and look forward to receiving further advice after its October meeting.

Copies of the published papers, and those marked as available to inquirers, identified in the annex listing papers considered by the Veterinary Products Committee at its meeting, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Policy Discussion Papers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the terms of the letter of confidentiality required to be signed by merchant banks, accountancy practices and other independent advisers to Government Departments when advice on policy discussion papers is commissioned from the private sector; whether the terms of that letter are standard throughout all Government Departments; when he last reviewed the need for advisers to be constrained in this way; and what were his conclusions.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is for Departments and agencies individually to seek appropriate assurances of confidentiality from those with whom they have dealings. The

terms of such assurances will vary according to the prevailing circumstances, including the nature of the official dealings. If my hon. Friend has a specific concern and will write to me with further details of it, I will pursue the matter further.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps the Office of Public Service and Science has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is examining the scope for involving the private sector in its areas of responsibility in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December 1992, and the further published guidance on contract energy management—17 February 1993—and joint ventures—16 March 1993.

Discussions continue with the higher education funding councils and other departments about ways in which the joint funding of infrastructural facilities in the science base might be achieved. On 10 March 1993, I announced the success of the United Kingdom's bid to host the European bioinformatics institute at Cambridge, which will be funded by the Government and the Wellcome Trust.

Chessington Computer Centre

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of the Chessington computer centre.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to announce that I have today established Chessington Computer Centre as an executive agency and trading fund within my Department. The arrangements for the agency are described in full in its framework document, copies of which have been placed in the Libraries of both houses.

Chessington provides a wide range of computerised payroll, personnel, financial accounting, superannuation awarding and other administrative services to customers in central Government and the wider public sector. Over 60 per cent. of civil servants are now paid using Chessington's payroll services and all computerised superannuation awards in central Government are made on Chessington's software. Executive agency and trading fund status will allow Chessington to develop its business on sound commercial lines, thereby enabling the agency to deliver increasing improvements in its services to customers, more efficiently and effectively.

I have set Chessington Computer Centre the following key targets:

(a) with the concurrence of the Treasury, the further financial target in 1993-94 of achievement of an operating surplus of £1.1 million.

(b) achievement of an average 6 per cent. increase in pay clerk productivity year on year over the period 1993-94 to 1995-96;

(c) for 1993-94, achievement of online availability of 97·5 per cent for all services; and

(d) over the period to 1995-96, meeting the quality of service standards agreed with customers in their customer service agreements.

Chessington is a definite candidate for privatisation. It is not being privatised immediately due to a lack of a commercial track record and of direct competition. Consideration of privatisation has been deferred to 1995 to give time for Chessington to establish its trading performance and for private sector competition to develop.

I have appointed Mr. Robert Edwards to be chief executive of Chessington. He will be directly accountable to me for the management and performance of Chessington. I wish him and all the staff of Chessington every success for the future.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Booth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the next steps initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: Work on agency creation has continued. During the first week of April a further 13 agencies will be launched. This will bring the total number of agencies to 89. More than 350,000 civil servants, almost 60 per cent. of the total, will be working in agencies and other organisations working on next steps lines. In addition, a further 19 candidates have been announced covering over 25,000 more civil servants and other areas are under consideration. All candidates will be identified by the end of 1993 with the aim of launching them by mid-1995—end-1994 and mid-1996 in Northern Ireland.

Within the civil service, agencies are a key vehicle for putting into practice the principles of the citizens charter. Some of the new agencies will issue a charter or charter standards statement at launch. Others will do so soon. All agencies are committed to delivering a high quality of service.

All the new agencies have been set key performance targets for their first year of operation. The details will be given by my right hon. Friends when announcing individual agency launches.

The list of agencies established or to be established by 5 April 1993 is:

	Staff[1]
Accounts Services Agency	85
ADAS Agency	2,280
Army Base Repair Organisation[2]	3,800
Building Research Establishment	700
Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments)	245
Central Office of Information[3]	620
Central Science Laboratory	375
Central Statistical Office	1,235
Central Veterinary Laboratory	615
Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment	600
Chessington Computer Centre[2,3]	450
Child Support Agency[2]	3,500
Civil Service College	230
Companies House[3]	1,035
Compensation Agency[4]	150
Defence Analytical Services Agency	130
Defence Operational Analysis Centre	175
Defence Postal and Courier Services	485
Defence Research Agency[3]	11,260
Directorate General of Defence Accounts	2,460
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	4,450
Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency[4]	260
Driving Standards Agency	1,900
Duke of York's Royal Military School	95
DVOIT	480
Employment Service	44,610
Fire Service College[3]	285
Forensic Science Service	615
Government Property Lawyers[2]	130
Her Majesty's Prison Service[2]	37,420

	Staff[1]
Historic Royal Palaces	350
Historic Scotland	630
HMSO[3]	3,175
Hydrographic Office	815
Insolvency Service	1,530
Intervention Board	970
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	330
Land Registry[3]	9,510
Medicines Control Agency[3]	325
Meteorological Office	2,460
Military Survey	1,155
National Physical Laboratory	790
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	50
Natural Resources Institute	440
Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation	1,630
NEL	375
NHS Estates	140
NHS Pensions Agency	630
Northern Ireland Child Support Agency[2,4]	700
Occupational Health Service	125
Ordnance Survey	2,280
Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland[4]	210
Patent Office[3]	1,015
Paymaster General's Office[2]	855
Pesticides Safety Directorate[2]	170
Planning Inspectorate	605
Public Record Office	445
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	60
Queen Victoria School	65
Radiocommunications Agency	535
RAF Maintenance	12,855
Rate Collection Agency[4]	280
Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency	190
Registers of Scotland	1,295
Royal Mint[3]	1,005
Royal Parks[2]	260
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	145
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency	215
Scottish Office Pensions Agency[3]	185
Scottish Prison Service[2]	4,600
Scottish Record Office[2]	125
Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[3]	1,110
Social Security Agency[4]	5,100
Social Security Benefits Agency	64,215
Social Security Contributions Agency	8,745
Social Security Information Technology Services Agency	4,090
Social Security Resettlement Agency	455
Teachers' Pensions Agency	290
The Buying Agency[3]	90
Training and Employment Agency[4]	1,670
Transport Research Laboratory	685
United Kingdom Passport Agency	1,290
Valuation and Lands Agency[2,4]	360
Valuation Office	5,030
Vehicle Certification Agency	75
Vehicle Inspectorate[3]	1,780
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	75
Warren Spring Laboratory	285
Wilton Park Conference Centre	25
89 in number TOTAL	269,570
Less Armed Forces personnel	7,730
TOTAL CIVIL SERVANTS	261,840
Customs and Excise[6] (30 Executive Units)	25,610
Inland Revenue[6] (34 Executive Offices)	63,105
GRAND TOTAL	350,555

[1] October 1992 figures excluding casuals, except new agencies which show staffing figure at launch date. Part-time staff are counted as half units.
[2] To be launched in the first week of April 1993.
[3] Trading Fund.
[4] Northern Ireland Civil Service.
[5] Excludes locally engaged staff.
[6] Departments operating fully on next steps lines. Staffing figure for Inland Revenue excludes the Valuation Office which is a free standing Agency.

The list of candidates for agency status announced by Ministers is as follows:

	Staff[1]
Army Logistics	[2]8,440
Defence Animal Centre	220
Defence Central Services	1,385
Directorate Information Technology Bureau Services	120
Driver and Vehicle Licensing (NI)[3]	150
Equipment Test and Evaluation	2,220
Fisheries Research Services	270
Fuel Suppliers Branch	20
Human Factors Research	390
Meat Hygiene Service[4]	1,800
MOD Police	5,075
Naval Training and Recruitment	5,200
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	1,995
Property Holdings Portfolio Management	1,645
RAF Training	9,200
Surveyor General's Organisation	350
Transport and Security Services Division	1,235
War Pensions Directorate	1,250
Youth Treatment Service	200
19 in number TOTAL	41,165
Less armed forces personnel:	15,765
TOTAL CIVIL SERVANTS:	25,400

[1] October 1992 figures excluding casuals. Part-time staff are counted as half units.
[2] Estimated to require 8,440 staff, drawn from a variety of sources.
[3] Northern Ireland Civil Service.
[4] Estimated to require 1,800 staff, drawn from a variety of sources.

EMPLOYMENT

Electrical Equipment Certification Service

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the future of the Health and Safety Executive's electrical equipment certification service.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what legislation would be necessary to privatise the electrical equipment certification service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following a recent consultants' report, which recommended privatisation of the electrical equipment certification service, the future of the service is being considered by the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission.

Privatisation would require primary legislation and we will be seeking parliamentary approval for powers which would enable privatisation to proceed.

Unemployed People (Courses)

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether unemployed people who have once been required to attend either a Restart course or a jobplan workshop, and who have complied with that requirement, are free from a subsequent requirement to attend such a workshop or course in a particular spell of unemployment; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not our intention that people should be required to attend more than one Restart course or more than one jobplan workshop within a spell of unemployment if they have already been required to attend and have completed the full programme.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who were the successful bidders for the contracts for jobplan workshops—JWPC/B93/12—and Restart courses—RCC/B93/11; what criteria were used for the selection of the successful tenders; and whether the lowest tenders were accepted.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Eric Illsley, dated March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about Restart Courses and Jobplan Workshops. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

It may help if I explain that contracts for Employment Service programmes are normally awarded as a result of competitive tendering. Such an exercise has recently been carried out for all Jobplan contracts and for Restart Courses contracts. Potential providers are normally invited to a briefing with the Employment Service Contract Manager where they are issued with the national specification for the programme that they wish to tender for. It is made clear at pre-briefing sessions that the over-riding factor which the Employment Service will consider when assessing tenders is value for money. I am attaching an extract from the Employment Service "Tendering and Contracting Guide" laying out the key criteria used to assess a tender. As you will see, these include cost factors but not to the exclusion of other items. Indeed, the point is stressed throughout the process that the Employment Service will not necessarily accept the lowest price on offer.

You refer to two specific cases in Barnsley. The Jobplan contracts have been awarded to the Chamber of Commerce Training (Barnsley) and Personal Evaluation Consultants, a local training organisation. The Restart Course contract has been awarded to the Chamber of Commerce Training (Barnsley). These organisations were judged to have submitted the best tenders. The decision followed full consideration of all the proposals in line with the guidelines set out by the Treasury's Public Purchasing Policy.

You asked whether the lowest tenders were accepted. I believe that it would be inappropriate to disclose confidential information relating to the costs of any of the individual proposals.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

10. *Assessment of tenders*

10.1 The over-riding principle is that the assessment process must be systematic, thorough and fair, and be seen as such. After the final schedule of tenders has been prepared, all tenders should be submitted at once to the ACM, who has the authority to recommend acceptance of a particular tender.

10.2 When assessing proposals the main factors to take into consideration are:

(i) that the proposal meets the required specification;

(ii) that 'value for money' is being met; in other words, that the desired quality can be achieved at a reasonable cost, that the proposed outputs are satisfactory;

(iii) the cost (including total costs, staff costs, premises costs, and consumable costs, VAT whether payable or not). A management fee, or profit margin can reasonably be included; it is the total cost which is important in relation to numbers helped/outputs specified;

(iv) the premises (accessibility, situation, space, heating, lighting, toilets, access for people with disabilities, etc);

(v) the ability and expertise of the tutor/leader, management support and back up arrangements;

(vi) other considerations eg administrative support, facilities and equipment; and

(vii) the ability of the provider to be flexible in the delivery of courses in terms of location, frequency and tutor/leader cover.

10.3 A record sheet should be completed to compare tenders on each of the major factors above. A suggested proforma is at Appendix 10.

10.4 *Note:* Tender cost comparisons should be made on the price before VAT is added.
The lowest tender should be accepted only if the quality of the proposed programme is considered to be of an acceptable and appropriate standard. The over-riding factor is "Value for Money".

10.5 Other factors may, however, influence the decision, eg, a more suitable location or a more experienced tutor or leader. It is therefore recommended that a shortlist of possible providers be drawn up.

Industrial Tribunals

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how engagement in an industrial tribunal hearing affects the state benefit status of the applicant.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Hilary Armstrong, dated March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about how engagement in an industrial tribunal hearing affects the state benefit status of the applicant. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

There are a range of possible effects which an Industrial Tribunal hearing may have on a claim for unemployment benefit and I have set them out below.

The Employment Protection Act gives employees statutory protection against unfair dismissal by their employer, along with other provisions concerning issues such as contractors of employment, wages questions and breach of contract, all of which are dealt with by Industrial Tribunals.

A claimant may be disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit for up to 26 weeks if they left their employment voluntarily or were dismissed because of misconduct. When a claim for unemployment is made, if it appears that the claimant contributed to their loss of employment, payments are withheld pending further enquiries of the claimant, their employer, or both and, where necessary, the decision of an independent adjudication officer is sought. If an Industrial Tribunal is pending and there is a conflict of evidence that cannot be resolved, the adjudication officer may refer the case to a Social Security Appeal Tribunal (SSAT) for a decision. The Social Security adjudicating authorities and the Industrial Tribunals are entirely independent of each other. Decisions of one are not binding on the other, however it is

possible that the evidence recorded by the Industrial Tribunal may be taken into account by a SSAT in reaching their decision.

Where a decision is given in favour of the client any arrears of benefit withheld are paid. It is a fundamental condition for receipt of benefit that a person be available for work on each day that they claim. For someone attending a tribunal they would have to be available for work at 24 hours' notice.

Where an Industrial Tribunal makes an award under the Employment Protection Act the Secretary of State is empowered to recover from the award, some or all of the unemployment benefit or income support already paid for the same period. The amount of benefit to be recovered depends on the amount that is awarded by the Industrial Tribunal for the period between the date of dismissal and the date of the Industrial Tribunal hearing. If an award is made in respect of the future loss of earnings there may be no unemployment benefit entitlement for any part of the period specified in the award which falls within a year of the termination of the unemployment.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Training Schemes

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the benefit entitlement of unemployed people who take up places on *(a)* the learning for work programme and *(b)* the community action programme; in what ways these will differ from the situation of those who join training for work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: People participating in learning for work and community action will receive an allowance equal to their unemployment benefit and/or income support entitlement when unemployed. Community action participants will receive an additional premium of £10 a week. In each case their eligibility for other social security benefits will be the same as that of training for work participants.

Electricity at Work Regulations 1989

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated cost to British industry of the implementation of the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.

Mr. McLoughlin: At the time of the drafting of these regulations, the Health and Safety Executive estimated that the quantifiable costs to employers would be in the order of £250,000 per annum at 1988 prices.

Employers who were already complying with existing legal requirements regarding the maintenance of electrical equipment should not have found it necessary to incur additional charges in order to comply with these regulations.

Unemployment, Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the unemployment figure for the travel-to-work area of the city of Liverpool in figures and percentage terms at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In February 1993, unadjusted claimant unemployment in the Liverpool travel-to-work area was 73,996 or 15·2 per cent. of the work force. This is 29 per cent. lower than in June 1986, when claimant unemployment in the region was at its peak.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she plans to improve the unemployment situation in the city of Liverpool; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The overall policy of the Department is to promote a free and flexible labour market that is designed to help encourage employment in Liverpool, as in all areas. In addition, the Department provides a range of employment and training programmes and local initiatives, through the Employment Service and training and enterprise councils, to help people increase their skills, and equip themselves for work. From April 1993, this range of measures is being enhanced and expanded.

Cricketers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many applications by professional cricketers for work permits to play cricket in the United Kingdom have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused to date in 1993; what changes have been made this year to the criteria for granting work permits; which British cricketing organisations were consulted about policy changes for granting work permits; and if she will make a statement;

(2) how many work permits were issued by the overseas labour section to cricketers to play cricket in the United Kingdom in each year since 1990; how many applications for work permits were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused by country or origin in each year; what are the qualifying criteria for granting work permits; and on what dates such criteria were altered.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information about the number of work permits issued by the overseas labour section for cricketers to play in Great Britain is not available. Work permits are issued only to cricketers who have experience of playing first-class cricket in their own country and who it is considered will not take employment away from resident players. The terms and conditions on offer have to be equivalent to those which apply to resident players.

The Department has a consistent policy with regard to the issue of work permits for cricketers. The criteria have not changed and, following discussions with the League Cricket Conference, Test and County Cricket Board, National Cricket Association and the Scottish Cricket Union, no changes are envisaged.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what basis Indian and Pakistani nationals who are professional cricketers are judged to be qualified to apply for work permits to play cricket in the United Kingdom; how many appeals against refusal to grant a work permit have been lodged this year, to date; and how many appeals *(a)* have been upheld, *(b)* have been dismissed and *(c)* are awaiting decision.

Mr. McLoughlin: Applications to employ professional cricketers who are Indian and Pakistani nationals are considered on the same basis as those for players from any other country. Information about appeals against decisions to refuse applications for cricketers is not available.

Health and Safety

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of prosecutions made in each EC country for breaches in each country's health and safety legislation and the total fines realised in each of the last three years.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has carried out a comparison of accident statistics in France, Italy, Germany and Spain compared with the United Kingdom. The conclusions were published in 1991 in "Workplace Health and Safety in Europe", a copy of which is in the Library.

During the United Kingdom presidency, we gave prominence to the need for a more consistent approach to the implementation and enforcement of EC legislation, including directives on health and safety. A comparison of sanction arrangements in member states would be useful in this context. We would hope that the Commission could include such a study in its future work programme.

Noise at Work

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prohibition notices were issued against employers in 1990-91 and 1991-92 relating to the control of noise at work for each of the geographical areas of *(a)* the factory inspectorate, *(b)* the agricultural inspectorate and *(c)* the quarries inspectorate; and what were the penalties in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: Prohibition notices do not impose explicit penalties. They are issued when there is a risk of serious personal injury. They require specified remedial action to be taken, usually immediately, to comply with the relevant statutory provisions.

The following requirements were made on prohibition notices issued during the periods 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Requirements made under the Noise at Work Regulations on Prohibition Notices[1] issued against employers by the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Factory, Agricultural and Quarries Inspectorates during 1990-91 and 1991-92[2]

HSE area	Factory inspectorate		Agricultural inspectorate		Quarries inspectorate	
	1990-91	1991-92[3]	1990-91	1991-92[3]	1990-91	1991-92[3]
South West	—	—	—	—	—	—
South	—	—	—	—	—	—
South East	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater London	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Anglia	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northern Home Counties	—	—	—	—	1	—
East Midlands	6	15	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wales	3	—	1	—	—	—
Marches	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Midlands	1	—	—	—	—	—
South Yorkshire and Humberside	1	—	—	—	—	—
West and North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merseyside	4	1	—	—	—	—
North West	—	—	—	—	—	—
North East	2	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland East	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland West	18	10	—	—	—	—
Total	35	26	1	—	1	—

[1] Includes deferred and immediate prohibition notices.
[2] Years commencing 1 April.
[3] Provisional.

Safety and Hygiene

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the full title of the projects and the amount of funding asked for in the applications for EC funding for the European Year of Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection from March 1992 to February 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The United Kingdom received 330 applications, which asked in total for nearly 9·8 mecu. I shall place a list of the project titles in the Library.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which projects related to the European Year of Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection, have received an EC grant of 1 million ecu or more.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the outcome of the individual projects supported with regard to improving the health, safety or welfare of employees at work during the European Year of Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The United Kingdom is currently contributing to the European Commission's final assessment of the year, which will include information about EC-supported projects. It will be published in October 1993 and I shall place a copy in the Library. In making recommendations for EC funding, the United Kingdom sought to support practical initiatives to improve health and safety in the workplace.

Employment, Greater London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what her Department forecasts to be the size of the Greater London labour force in 2000; and what it forecasts to be the total number of jobs available in the capital in the same year.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the year 2000, the civilian labour force in Greater London is projected to be 3,485,000. The Department does not make forecasts of employment or unemployment.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of employees in employment in the Greater London area in each main sector for each year since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is available from September 1981 from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Gas Boilers

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to improve safety inspection arrangements for domestic gas boilers and flues in holiday homes available for commercial rent.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 cover the installation, maintenance and use of most domestic gas appliances. However, they do not require landlords to service such appliances in their properties. The regulations are currently under review and the Health and Safety Commission is expected to publish a consultative document later in the year.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Private Finance Initiatives

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the "Treasury Private Finance Guidance" published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Our early examination of how the Government's private finance initiative might be pursued within the Lord Chancellor's Department has not identified any immediate possibilities for joint ventures, and our present leasing of equipment from the private sector falls outside the scope of the initiative. We will continue to seek the most efficient means of financing procurement and capital projects, including the possibility of private sector investment.

Recorders

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many women recorders and assistant recorders there are.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 1 March 1993, there were 41 female recorders out of a total of 828 and 50 female assistant recorders out of a total of 428.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many ethnic minority recorders and assistant recorders there are.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The ethnic origin of applicants for judicial appointment was not recorded prior to the autumn of 1991 so the available information may not be complete. As at 1 March 1993 there were, however, 10 recorders out of a total of 828 and seven assistant recorders out of a total of 428 who are believed to be of ethnic minority origin.

Lease Assignments

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will introduce legislation to abolish the liability of original losses, by virtue of privity of contract, for the defaults of assignees of their lease.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) on 31 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *197*.

Circuit Judges

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many circuit judges are aged over 65 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 1 March 1993, there were 490 circuit judges in post. Of these, 101 had passed their 65th birthday.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many circuit judges have already completed 15 years' service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 1 March 1993, 61 out of the 490 circuit judges in post had completed 15 years' service as circuit judges.

Land Ownership

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of land acreage in England and Wales is currently owned by trusts located outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Land Registry does not maintain statistics relating to registered land acreage or to the purpose or nature of business of registered proprietors. To obtain the information requested would involve an inspection of each specific registration and this could be done only at disproportionate cost.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General when the Law Officers Departments last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among their employees; when they next plan to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The position in the Departments for which I am responsible is as follows:

(a) *survey of ethnic origins*—the Crown prosecution service conducted a survey in January 1990, which was followed up in June 1990 and December 1991. In the next few months, the service will be resurveying those who have not yet submitted a questionnaire. All new entrants to the service are required to complete a questionnaire on application. The Treasury Solicitor's Department last conducted a survey in January 1993 and the next survey will be in January 1994. The Serious Fraud Office has not conducted a specific survey, and has no plans to do so, as the information is available from staff records.

(b) *Survey of the number of women*—neither the Crown prosecution service nor the SFO undertakes, or plans to undertake, particular surveys of the sex of staff, as the information is available from staff records. The Treasury Solicitor's Department last conducted a survey in January 1993 and the next survey will be in January 1994.

Neither survey has been conducted, or is planned to be conducted, in respect of members of the legal secretariat, as they are on secondment from other Government Departments.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at the Law Officers' Departments.

The Attorney-General: Recruits to the senior grades —as to any grade in the civil service—are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the Civil Service Commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including extending links with institutions of higher education; equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; and using validated selection procedures.

Both the Crown prosecution service and the Serious Fraud Office have joined Opportunity 2000. The Crown prosecution service published a "Programme for Action on Race" in October 1991 and will release shortly a similar "Programme for Action on Disability".

Mr. Janner: To ask the Attorney-General how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in the Law Officers' Departments are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

The Attorney-General: The position in the Departments for which I am responsible is as follows:

Grade	*Women*		*Ethnic*		*Registered disabled*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Crown Prosecution Service						
1	1	(100)	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	2	(3·4)	1	(1·9)	—	—
6	26	(12·9)	2	(1·3)	—	—
7	922	(45·3)	67	(5·6)	10	(0·5)
Overall (All)	4,002	(61·2)	272	(6·2)	46	(0·7)
Treasury Solicitor's Department						
1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	1	(50)	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	1	(25)	—	—	—	—
5	10	(23)	1	(2)	—	—
6	12	(19)	1	(2)	—	—
7	28	(35)	7	(9)	—	—
Overall (All)	190	(37)	57	(11)	8	(2)
Serious Fraud Office						
1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	2	(16·6)	—	—	—	—
6	5	(35·7)	1	(7·1)	—	—
7	3	(30)	—	—	—	—
Overall (All)	65	(45·5)	14	(9·8)	—	—

Members of the legal secretariat will be reflected, as appropriate, in the records of the Government Departments from which they are seconded.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Housing

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities have sold off all of their council housing stock.

Mr. Baldry: To date, a total of 21 local authorities have disposed of all, or the vast majority, of their housing stock through large-scale voluntary transfers. The councils concerned are listed in the table. Those marked with an asterisk no longer have any council housing stock other than hostels or part shares in dwellings sold under shared ownership schemes.

Breckland DC*
Broadland DC*
Bromley LBC*
Chiltern DC*
Christchurch DC*
East Cambridgeshire DC*
East Dorset DC
Medina DC
Mid Sussex DC
Newbury DC
North Bedfordshire DC
Rochester DC*
Ryedale DC
Sevenoaks DC
South Buckinghamshire DC
South Wight DC
Suffolk Coastal DC
Surrey Heath DC*
Swale DC
Tonbridge and Malling DC
Tunbridge Wells DC

Council Tax

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average band C council tax in Conservative-controlled, Labour-controlled and Liberal-controlled local authorities.

Mr. Robin Squire: The average headline band C council tax in areas under Conservative control is £456. This is £107 lower than the corresponding figure for Labour areas and £19 lower than the corresponding figure for Liberal areas.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded

by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is not held centrally by my Department and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Solihull Unitary Development Plan

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he now proposes to review the housing figure of 7,500 in the Solihull unitary development plan originally recommended in the west midlands strategic guidance of February 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The strategic guidance for the west midlands, published in February 1988, establishes the level of new housing completions to be provided in individual unitary development plans between April 1988 and March 2001. The Secretary of State considers that it is not the role of those individual plans to review the strategic guidance figures. Such a review will be carried out in the context of regional guidance for the west midlands, which the Secretary of State intends to publish during 1994.

The inspector into the Solihull unitary development plan endorsed this approach. However, in examining the level of housing supply needed to meet the figure of 7,500, he concluded that further sites should be identified, and he also indicated that the authority should identify a reasonable amount of further land to meet longer-term development needs. The borough council is considering his recommendations and will publish its response in the form of proposed modifications, which will themselves be open to objection.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been received for the post of chief executive of the Urban Regeneration Agency; when interviews will be held; and who will decide who is to be appointed.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of 178 applications have been received. The date for interviews has yet to be set. Lord Walker, as the Urban Regeneration Agency's chairman-designate, will play a leading role in the selection process, and the appointment will be made by the agency when established.

India

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on matters discussed and decisions taken during his recent visit to India.

Mr. Howard: I visited India from 17 to 21 March in order to underline United Kingdom support for environment conservation measures in India and to emphasise our interest in further co-operation as well as to continue the dialogue with India on international environmental issues.

I toured the Western Ghats forestry project in Karnataka state where our Overseas Development Administration is funding the joint management by local people and the authorities of a large forest area. In Delhi, I had constructive and practical discussions with members of the Indian Government on environmental issues, including the important role our two countries are playing in the follow-up to Rio, on possible further joint initiatives in that context, on international co-operation and on the ways in which British industry can collaborate with and work in India, particularly in the context of the Indo-British partnership initiative. I also met environmental scientists and held discussions with leading industrialists.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 11 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns *835-36*, what have been the sources of the representations made to the Energy Efficiency Office recommending the abolition of the client contribution.

Mr. Maclean: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has received a number of representations from Neighbourhood Energy Action on the abolition of the client contribution. In addition, letters in support of Neighbourhood Energy Action's request have been received from one hon. Member and the chairman of British Gas.

Woodgate Valley Site

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the future use of Woodgate Valley site A in Birmingham.

Mr. Baldry: The Secretary of State has received three letters objecting to the recommendation to allocate the site for industrial use made by the inspector, who held a public inquiry into Birmingham's unitary development plan between November 1991 and February 1992.

Local Authorities (Complaints System)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have a formal complaints system for service users; and if he will list them.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not held centrally. The position of individual local authorities will be published in local newspapers next year as part of the Audit Commission's work on local government performance indicators. National information will be published by the commission in 1995.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy with regard to planning appeals in respect of existing opencast mining applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight), on 25 March, *Official Report*, columns *714-15*.

Housing Partnership Scheme

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by local authority, the total bid for funding under the housing partnership scheme and indicate the allocation made in cash terms and as a percentage of the bid.

Mr. Baldry: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

National Parks

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his current plans in relation to legislation for the creation of a new board structure for the administration of national park authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: Our policy statement on the national parks, published in January 1992, promised legislation to create independent authorities for the eight national parks in England and Wales currently run as county council committees. I fully recognise the importance of introducing national park legislation at the earliest opportunity and I have repeatedly said that we will do so.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will be receiving a reply to his letter of 1 March on behalf of a constituent and which had been originally sent to the Department of Social Security.

Mr. Robin Squire: I replied to the hon. Member on 31 March 1993.

Olympic Games

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to enable London to be considered in the future as a suitable city to host the Olympic games.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Bolton Council

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has concluded his consideration of the response from Bolton metropolitan borough council to the notice served on the authority on 29 October 1992 under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has now completed his careful consideration of the response which Bolton has made to the notice served on the authority on 29 October 1992, and has today given a direction under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The effect of the direction is that the authority is required to demonstrate to the Secretary of State's satisfaction that before the current arrangements come to an end in March 1995, the tendering conditions set out in section 9(4) of the Act, have been complied with before any of this building maintenance work is again assigned to the direct labour organisation.

Council Tax Capping

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how local authorities have budgeted for 1993-94; what decisions in the light of those budgets he has reached on council tax capping for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: This year, the first years of the council tax, all but a tiny minority of authorities have set affordable budgets and council taxes. Only three of 419 English authorities have in my opinion set budgets which are excessive or represent an excessive year-on-year increase.

I have designated these three authorities—Castle Point, Gloucestershire, and Harlow—for capping and I have proposed caps as shown in the table.

	Authority's 1993-94 budget	*Proposed cap*	*Original council tax for 2 adult band D dwelling*	*Council tax reduction implied by proposed cap for 2 adult band D dwelling*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£*	*£*
Castle Point	8·470	7·97	625	18
Gloucestershire	316·889	306·61	(474·636)	55
Harlow	17·953	11·20	987	288

The principles that I have adopted for selecting these authorities broadly give effect to the provisional criteria which I announced to the House on 26 November 1992.

I consider, on the basis of all the available information, that my proposed caps are reasonable, appropriate and achievable in all the circumstances of the authorities concerned. If the authorities accept my proposed caps new lower bills will be able to be issued without delay.

Authorities have 28 days in which to accept or challenge my proposed caps. In the latter case, they must specify an alternative cap, together with their reasons for it. In such circumstances, it is open to me to set the final cap at the level originally proposed or some different amount. If an authority does not accept my proposed cap I have to set the final cap by order, a draft of which must be approved by the House of Commons.

Local Income Tax

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exemplify, for a single person on average earnings, what would be the annual liability and the rate in the pound under a local income tax system for each local authority area in England in 1993-94 assuming *(a)* the budgets which local authorities have set for that year and *(b)* full resource equalisation.

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Toxic Waste (Transport)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he has taken to *(a)* monitor and *(b)* prevent the import of toxic waste cargo containing dioxin TCDD from Hamburg through Hull to Pontypool;

(2) when he now intends to implement a ban on the import of toxic waste from developed countries;

(3) what information he has about the proposed importation of toxic waste containing dioxin TCDD from Hamburg through Hull to Pontypool.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) on 30 March, *Official Report*, column *138*.

The Government intend to use the EC waste shipments regulation after it applies in May 1994 to reduce, as far as possible, the amount of waste imported for final disposal.

EDUCATION

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Forth: The reply that I gave to my right hon. Friend on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *347*, set out the Department's role in supporting the introduction of private finance in schools, further and higher education. The Department is now examining the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December 1992, and the further published guidance on contract energy management—17 February 1993—and joint ventures—16 March 1993.

Sex Education

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to allow the introduction of condoms in schools;

(2) if he will bring forward proposals to ensure that sex education in schools embraces a moral code and the responsibilities of parenthood.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Section 46 of the Education (No 2) Act 1986 already requires that any sex education which schools provide—whether or not it is required as part of the national curriculum—should be given in such a manner as to encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life.

Testbourne School, Whitchurch

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to take a decision on the application of Testbourne school, Whitchurch, Hampshire, for grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has approved the application for the acquisition of grant-maintained status by Testbourne school with effect from 1 September 1993.

Staff-Student Ratios

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest staff-to-student ratios in further and higher education colleges and universities.

Mr. Boswell: Data for student to staff ratios in further and higher education and universities are shown in the table for the academic year 1991-92.

	1991-92
LEA Maintained establishments	
Futher education	11·9
Higher education[1]	9·1
PCFC Institutions	17·0
Universities (Great Britain)	[2]12·5

[1] Following the transfer of polytechnics and colleges of higher education to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) in 1989 higher education forms only a small part of the provision in maintained establishments.

[2] Provisional.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about teachers' pay in 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: On 12 February, the Prime Minister announced that the Government proposed to implement, with modifications, the recommendations of the School Teachers' Review Body for teachers' pay in England and Wales for 1993-94. After careful consideration of the representations I have received from the local authorities, the teachers' associations and others, I remain convinced that the restructuring recommended by the STRB is the right way forward, and I intend to implement it on 1 September 1993. In the light of the observations that have been made to me, I have decided to ease the introduction of the new pay spine by offering some flexibility in the assimilation arrangements, where this proves necessary.

Firstly, there will be cash safeguarding to ensure that no teacher will be worse off under the new arrangements on 1 September than if the old structure had been left in place. This safeguarding will be lifted as soon as a teacher's points entitlement under the new system overtakes the safeguarded salary.

Secondly, while LEAs and schools are expected to implement the new structure, they may, if necessary, preserve the discretionary inner London supplement for one more year as a separate allowance of £822 for the teachers who now hold it, instead of converting it into an extra spine point. No new payments will be authorised, but the new system will permit a third point on the spine to be awarded for recruitment or retention in inner London schools.

Thirdly, discretionary scale points may also be preserved for one more year at their 31 August cash value, instead of being converted automatically into new spine points. There will be no new awards of discretionary scale points. The new structure will permit up to three spine points to be awarded for excellence, which in many cases will overtake the discretionary scale points from 1 September.

These changes will not significantly vary the cost of the award, which falls within the 0–1·5 per cent. range for pay settlements in the public sector.

In response to requests for clarification of entitlement to the mandatory spine point for teachers of pupils in ordinary schools with special educational needs, I have decided that the new school teachers' pay and conditions document will define such entitlement in terms of those wholly or mainly teaching pupils with statements of special educational needs.

I am today laying before Parliament a pay and conditions order bringing into force the new rates of pay which will apply from 1 April, and providing for lump sum payments of £90 to be made to qualified classroom teachers in May. Copies of this order, and details of the revised arrangements for the introduction of the new pay spine in September, are being sent to all maintained schools, to all local education authorities and to the teachers' and employers' associations.

Drafts of the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1993, which will set out the details of the new pay structure which is to apply from 1 September and will provide for assimilation from the old structure to the new, and of the associated circular of guidance, will shortly be sent to the relevant teachers' and employers' associations and to representatives of the governors of voluntary schools and grant-maintained schools.

Violence in Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made of the change in the incidence of violence in schools since the abolition of corporal punishment.

Mr. Forth: The Department has not commissioned any such studies.

Physical Education

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average number of hours per week allocated to physical education in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available.

Undergraduates (Suicides)

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students at English universities have committed suicide in each of the last three years; and how many were male and how many female.

Mr. Boswell: The table shows numbers of deaths in England and Wales from suicide for full-time students aged 18 and over.

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
Men	73	57	64
Women	15	15	21
Total	88	72	85

The suicides in the three years represent approximately 11 per 100,000 of the full-time student population in further and higher education aged 18 and over.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Parks

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made towards establishing the royal parks as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I am pleased to announce that the Royal Parks Agency will be established today. The royal parks are London's most important recreational areas. They are important historic landscapes which make a vital contribution to the character of the city alongside its great buildings. The aims and objectives of the agency are set out in a framework document, copies of which will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. I am confident that the managerial freedoms granted to the chief executive in the framework document will enable the Royal Parks Agency to provide the highest standards of excellence and customer service. The key targets which I have set the agency for its first year of operation are:

Conservation

1. To prepare up-to-date condition surveys and prepare renovation and forward maintenance programmes for trees, buildings and horticulture.
2. To develop and institute during 1993-94 an independent assessment of the horticultural quality of each of the Royal Parks.

Visitors

3. To develop and carry out surveys of visitors to the Royal Parks to identify their views and to develop a basis for setting and publishing targets relating to visitor satisfaction for future years.

Financial

4. To introduce charges for car parking in Hyde Park and Regent's Park by September 1993, and to increase by 5 per cent. income from all other sources, except for recharges and VAT refunds.

Citizen's Charter

5. To complete the implmentation of the Citizen's Charter in the Royal Parks. In particular, to publish a Charter standard statement, by the end of November, setting out quantifiable levels of customer service and to report regularly and publicly on performance against these standards.

Efficiency

6. To make efficiency savings of 1·5 per cent. on running costs.
7. To finalise an Information Technology strategy for the Agency, agree a phased programme for implementation and commence implementation in accordance with the programme.

Market Testing

8. To complete the market testing of the management of the works programme by June 1993, and to prepare a report to Ministers, by December 1993, on what further scope there is in the Agency for market testing work.

The chief executive, Mr. David Welch, will be directly accountable to me for the performance of the Royal Parks Agency. An independent advisory group will advise me on the agency's strategy and performance.

Bletchley Park

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what grounds he has refused to add Bletchley park and the historic huts sited in its grounds to the statutory list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My decision not to list the huts at Bletchley park was based on advice from English Heritage, my statutory professional advisers.

The great historical importance of the events which took place at Bletchley park is fully appreciated, but English Heritage's advice is that the huts are of no architectural significance in themselves and do not illustrate the events that took place there. No original machines or other fixtures survive.

Bletchley park house, the headquarters building of the operational centre, is a listed building; and the whole of the site has been designated a conservation area. This means that demolition of any of the huts would require consent from the local planning authority.

TRANSPORT

Congestion Charging Technology

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the review of congestion charging technology commissioned by his Department as part of the London congestion charging research programme.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to announce that this report, produced by the university of Newcastle upon Tyne, was published yesterday. It describes the main technical options and provides an initial assessment. Copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on 29 March, *Official Report*, column *5*.

Regional Air Services

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those United Kingdom regions that satisfy the criteria under article 9 of the EC Council Regulation No. 95/93 allowing slots at major airports to be reserved for regional air services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: There are no plans to apply the provisions of article 9, and consequently no assessment has been made of which regions, if any, would meet the criteria specified in the article.

Air Charter Services

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those countries which operate controls on the number of charter services operating from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: From the information available to us, a number of countries place restrictions on the number of charter services operating from the United Kingdom. Canada and Australia limit the number of airports which may be served in their territory. Cyprus and to a lesser extent Malta limit the airports in the United Kingdom from which charters may operate. Iceland, Israel and Russia tend not to allow charter services to operate on routes which are already served by a scheduled service.

Car Immobilisers

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to introduce legislation making it obligatory for motor car manufacturers to make car immobilisation devices standard features; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There is a legal requirement under the Type Approval (Great Britain) Regulations 1984 for cars to be fitted with an immobilising device. This normally is a steering column lock acting as an electrical and a mechanical immobiliser. Car thieves have, however, found ways of defeating such devices made to current legal standards and some manufacturers are fitting more sophisticated devices. We are also working with our EC partners to improve the legal standards for immobilisers.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many first registrations were handled by the DVLA for 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: DVLA handles the first registration of all vehicles in Great Britain. The information requested is as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
January	256,550	188,430	150,627
February	200,750	146,148	142,183
March	193,385	146,751	143,290
April	217,345	199,569	169,824
May	228,331	141,076	148,494
June	190,645	137,605	152,987
July	117,109	98,825	115,559
August	382,829	300,698	307,375
September	226,536	204,270	185,437
October	207,341	148,461	137,795
November	139,734	126,352	129,778
December	87,436	84,496	107,834
Totals	2,447,991	1,922,681	1,891,183

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans the DVLA has, in bidding for the register of seamen and shipping, to move the work to Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The invitations to tender for the services provided by the register of shipping and seamen have yet to be issued. If the DVLA is invited to tender and a decision is taken to bid for the work, all the associated issues will be fully addressed in the agency's tender document.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in which parliamentary constituency each DVLA office is situated.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is as follows:

Office	*Parliamentary constituency*
Aberdeen	Aberdeen, South
Bangor	Conwy
Birmingham	Birmingham, Ladywood
Bournemouth	Bournemouth, West
Brighton	Brighton, Pavilion
Bristol[1]	Northavon
Cardiff	Cardiff, North
Carlisle	Penrith and The Border
Chelmsford	Chelmsford
Chester	City of Chester
Coventry	Coventry, South East
Croydon	Croydon, South
Dudley	Dudley, East
Dundee	Dundee, West
Edinburgh[1]	Edinburgh, Pentlands
Exeter	Exeter
Glasgow	Glasgow, Hillhead
Gloucester	Gloucestershire, West
Guildford	Guildford
Haverfordwest	Pembroke
Huddersfield	Huddersfield
Hull	Hull, West
Ilford	Ilford, South
Inverness	Inverness
Ipswich	Ipswich
Leeds	Leeds, Central
Leicester	Leicester, South
Lincoln	Lincoln
Liverpool	Liverpool, Riverside
London Central	Southwark and Bermondsey
London Enforcement Office[1] (Great Marlborough Street)	City of London and Westminster, South
London Enforcement Office—Sidcup	Old Bexley and Sidcup
Luton	Luton, South
Maidstone	Maidstone
Manchester[1]	Stretford
Middlesborough	Middlesborough
Newcastle	Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North
Northampton	Northampton, South
Norwich	Norwich, South
Nottingham[1]	Nottingham, South
Oxford	Oxford, West and Abingdon
Peterborough	Peterborough
Portsmouth	Portsmouth, South
Preston	Preston
Reading[1]	Reading, East
Sheffield	Sheffield, Central
Shrewsbury	Shrewsbury and Atcham
Sidcup	Old Bexley and Sidcup
Stanmore	Harrow, East
Stoke	Stoke-on-Trent, Central
Swansea[2]	Swansea, East
Swindon	Swindon
Taunton	Taunton
Truro	Truro and St. Austell
Worcester	Worcester

[1] Including area office.
[2] DVLC and VRO.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list, for each year that the agency has existed, the income generated by the DVLA, the numbers of staff by grace in the driver and vaehicle licensing centre, Swansea, and the numbers of staff by grade in the agency outside Swansea;

(2) what proportion of the DVLA's income has gone to the Treasury in each year since its establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total revenue and other income collected by the DVLA in the two complete financial years since it became an agency was:

	1990-91 £'000	*1991-92 £'000*
(i) Vehicle Excise Duty (net of refunds) passed to the Consolidated Fund	2,930,361	2,930,645
(ii) Fees and other Receipts passed to the Consolidated Fund	48,799	68,438
(iii) Receipts Appropriated to the DVLA	16,082	21,142

The average staff in post during those years, by grade, was:

Grade	*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	Based at Swansea	*Based outside Swansea*	*Based at Swansea*	*Based outside Swansea*
Grade 3	1		1	
Grade 5	4·5		4	
Medical officer	7		6·5	
Grade 6	4		4	
Grade 7	21·5		21	
SEO	37	7	37·5	7
HEO	108	56·5	106·5	56
EO	256·5	175	261	171
AO	810·5	866	815	872·5
AA	1,740	326	1,629·5	295·5
Casuals	58	85	38·5	46·5
Other grades	347	64·5	323	67
TOTALS[1]	3,395·0	1,580·0	3,247·5	1,515·5

[1] Excludes staff employed in the Driver, Vehicle and Operator Information Technology agency.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those areas of work that the DVLA intends to bid for, or is at present bidding for, following the changes in the framework document.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The DVLA framework document came into force on 2 April 1990 and has not been subject to revision. In order to spread overheads and improve efficiency the agency's policy is to explore opportunities to enhance and expand the range of services provided in the light of the wishes of customers and in keeping with Government policy. Details of the DVLA's current bids for work are classified as commercial in confidence.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many females are employed in the DVLC, Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: At the end of March 1993 there were a total of 2,448 females employed in the DVLC, Swansea of whom 496 were part-time or job-sharing employees. This total represents just over 70 per cent. of the Swansea work force.

Road Schemes

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made on taking forward road schemes using design and build contracts.

Mr. MacGregor: The success of the trial schemes at Thetford and Yellowham has encouraged us to move on to

bigger projects and I am pleased to announce that four more schemes are to be taken forward this way. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic has today announced the decision to go ahead with the A45 Stonebridge improvement scheme to the east of Birmingham. The aim is to seek tenders for this £10 million scheme in May and to start work early next year.

Also in the spring of next year, and subject of course to completion of statutory processes, we propose to initiate our largest design and build scheme to date. The £85 million widening of the M25, within highway boundaries, to dual four lanes between junctions 8 and 10 will provide contractors with ample opportunity to demonstrate their skills to build this 14-mile length of road with minimum disruption to users of the motorway.

We intend appointing a contractor to design and build replacement viaducts at the A38 Marsh Mills interchange in Plymouth. Our aim is to select a contractor later this year with a view to work starting in early 1994.

We are preparing also a contract to trial design and build on a major maintenance scheme for M25 between junctions 2 and 3. We expect to invite tenders in May with a view to an award of contract in August.

This package of schemes illustrates the Government's commitment to reducing congestion on our roads by harnessing the initiative of contractors to secure the most up-to-date and cost-effective methods. The taxpayer will also benefit from greater certainty over timing and cost.

Railway Pension Schemes

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake to conduct a ballot of railway pensioners before imposing any revised scheme for the management of their pension fund.

Mr. Freeman: It is for the trustees, trade unions, pensioners' bodies and individuals to make representations on the basis of the consultative document "Railway Pensions after Privatisation". They have done so extensively.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received on the future of railway pension schemes in response to his consultation document.

Mr. Freeman: In addition to representations from the British Railways Board, the British Rail Pension Trustee Company Limited and the railway trade unions, we have received responses from many other interested organisations, and numerous individual railway employees and pensioners. We are analysing these responses.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to revise the options offered to existing railway pensioners, as defined in paragraph 37 of his consultation document.

Mr. Freeman: As I informed Standing Committee B on 23 March, the Government aim to make decisions by the Report stage of the Railways Bill.

Rail Transport

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects British Rail to issue a revised edition of its conditions of carriage as promised by the passengers charter.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the revised conditions are about to be published and will come into effect on 17 May, along with the summer timetable.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Trees

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the report by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre on threats of extinction to tree species.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This report was produced in February 1991 by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre under contract to the International Tropical Timber Organisation and paid for by the Government of Japan. We have no plans to publish it.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in the Privy Council Office are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council has no staff at grades 1 or 2. At grades 3 to 7 it has five staff, one of whom is a woman—grade 7—and none of whom are from ethnic minorities or disabled. Overall, 50 per cent. of current Privy Council staff are women, and 6 per cent. are from ethnic minorities. None is disabled.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Lord President of the Council when the Privy Council Office last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Given the size of the office—32 staff—such surveys are inappropriate.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at the Privy Council Office.

Mr. Newton: Senior posts in the Privy Council Office are filled from within the civil service, often by staff on loan. Such direct recruitment as occurs is conducted in accordance with the relevant equal opportunities code of practice.

HEALTH

Psychogeriatric Care Beds

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many psychogeriatric continuing care beds are funded by the NHS in the independent sector in each district health authority;

(2) if she will publish tables indicating the number of *(a)* geriatric and *(b)* psychogeriatric continuing care beds

available (i) currently, (ii) in 1990, (iii) in 1985 and (iv) in 1980 in each district health authority; and if she will also provide figures of the number of beds per 1,000 of the population aged over 65 years in each district health authority at each of these dates.

Mr. Yeo: Information collected centrally does not separately identify continuing care beds.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's guidance to health authorities on the number of psychogeriatric continuing care beds per thousand population aged over 65 years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: District health authorities, are responsible for assessing the needs of their residents and for securing a comprehensive range of services—including psychiatric services—to meet those needs within available resources.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had since 1989 with the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Physicians on the number of psychogeriatric continuing care beds per thousand population aged over 65 years in each health authority area.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Community Health Councils

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of community health councils in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The annual expenditure on community health councils since 1986-87 has been:

	£ million
1986-87	7·2
1987-88	7·5
1988-89	8·0
1989-90	8·6
1990-91	9·6

Prescriptions

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of prescriptions for NHS drugs issued in each year since 1982; what is the total cost of the NHS drugs bill relative to the most recent available year's costs in each year since 1982.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Family Health Services in England: numbers of prescribed items dispensed and drugs bill expenditure 1982-83 to 1991-92.

Year	*Number of prescribed items dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors millions*	*Drugs bill expenditure as a percentage of drugs bill expenditure in 1991-92*[1]
1982-83	332·3	43·55
1983-84	336·9	48·77
1984-85	345·1	51·45
1985-86	341·2	55·03
1986-87	346·4	59·57
1987-88	361·9	66·29
1988-89	376·9	75·27
1989-90	385·5	83·82
1990-91	396·6	89·77
1991-92	415·2	100·00

[1] 1991-92 = 100 per cent.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people would be exempt from prescription charges if the same exemption limits were to apply as are used for free eye tests; and what estimate has been made of the financial consequences of such change.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is estimated that such a change might reduce the number of people entitled to free prescriptions to about 20 million and reduce the need for voted provision for the national health service by between £700 million and £800 million a year.

Ophthalmic Services (Children)

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the joint working party of the British Paediatric Association and the College of Ophthalmologists looking at the ophthalmic services for children was reconvened; what progress it has made so far; and when it is likely to report.

Dr. Mawhinney: The first meeting took place on 2 March. I understand that at least two further meetings are planned between now and September to conduct a thorough review of the previous working party's 1984 report. The working party hopes to complete its work by the autumn.

Hospitals (Charging)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which countries in the European Community charge patients for staying in hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the state health care sector, hospital in-patients may be liable for charges in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Italy and the Irish Republic. Details are given in leaflet T4, "Health Advice for Travellers", copies of which are available in post offices and in the Library.

HIB Meningitis Vaccine

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children suffered a reaction to the HIB meningitis vaccine in the latest year for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1 October 1992, when Haemophilus Influenzae b (HiB) vaccine was introduced in the United Kingdom, more than 4 million doses have been distributed.

So far, 807 reports of adverse events have been submitted under the yellow card scheme to the Committee

on Safety of Medicines—a rate of 20 per 100,000 doses, which is similar to those routinely reported after immunisation with other childhood vaccines. As most HiB immunisations have been given at the same time as either diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis or measles, mumps, rubella vaccine, reactions other than those at the actual injection-site could not with certainty be associated with the HiB immunisation.

Reports of adverse events after HiB immunisation are being kept under careful scrutiny.

Mentally Ill People (Homicides and Suicides)

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made for the funding of the confidential inquiry into homicides and suicides by mentally ill people after April.

Mr. Yeo: Central funding for the inquiry will continue in 1993-94, subject to a satisfactory progress report from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Special Hospitals (Noise and Nuisance)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statutory rights patients in special hospitals have to protect themselves from noise and nuisance generated by machinery being utilised by the hospital authorities or their agents.

Mr. Yeo: National health service patients, including those in special hospitals, have the same rights to protection against noise as the public generally under health and safety and environmental protection legislation. Crown immunity was removed from health authorities in 1991 and this legislation is now fully enforceable in hospitals by the local statutory enforcement body.

Ambulance Service

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines she has on the minimum manning requirements for holiday and sickness cover in the ambulance service;

(2) what are the recommended and actual manning levels for each of the ambulance services in England and Wales.

Mr. Sackville: There are no recommended manning levels. Individual ambulance services determine how many staff they need to meet the standards set by service purchasers.

Romanian Adoption Committee

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions were drawn from the recent visit by Department of Health officials to Romania concerning the work of the Romanian Adoption Committee; and if she will make a statement on the relevant statistics for recent numbers of adoptions.

Mr. Yeo: Department of Health officials visited Romania from 3 to 10 February and met representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Committee for Adoptions and others. The Romanian law on adoption identifies domestic adoption as the first option; in 1992 there were 2,460 domestic adoptions. They are opposed to institutionalised care as a long-term solution to children's needs and recognise the role that inter-country adoption can play in avoiding this. They are concerned at the number of cases where children have been taken from the country without approval and are anxious to prevent this. To this end, they are determined to work only with those countries signing formal agreements. There have been 10 adoptions by British parents since the agreement was signed, three under the agreement and seven transitional cases.

Baxter Healthcare Ltd.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent by the NHS on products manufactured by Baxter Healthcare Ltd. for the latest year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information provided to the Department under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme by individual companies is treated as commercial-in-confidence.

Children's Hospices

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contribution her Department makes to the Francis House children's hospice; how many children from Liverpool were cared for by the hospice during the past 12 months; what other provision of children's hospices is available in the north-west; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Department is not contributing to the funding of Francis House. Sixteen children from the Mersey region have been cared for at the hospice, which at present is the only children's hospice serving the north-west.

Children's hospices are eligible to apply for funding from the top-sliced allocation of £32·3 million for specialised palliative care for the terminally ill, although it will be for health authorities to decide the allocation of these funds in accordance with local priorities.

Alcohol (Advertising)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations have been made on the issue of introducing health warnings on advertisements for alcoholic beverages; and what plans she has to introduce such measures.

Dr. Mawhinney: Alcohol advertising is regulated by codes of practice administered by the advertising industry's self-regulated bodies. Alcohol Concern has made representations on the introduction of health warnings. There are, however, no current plans to do so.

District Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of those people appointed to be chairmen of district health authorities with effect from 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have today placed in the Library a list of those people appointed as chairmen of district health authorities with effect from 1 April 1993.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the key business targets for the Medicines Control Agency for 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today placed a copy of the 1993-94 key business targets for the Medicines Control Agency in the Library.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* formal complaints were dealt with, *(b)* service committee meetings were held and *(c)* practitioners were found in breach of their terms of service in each family health services authority in London in the last 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the family health services authorities concerned for details.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is examining the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December 1992, and the further published guidance on contract energy management—17 February 1993—and joint ventures—16 March 1993. The national health service management executive wrote to all NHS directors of finance on 14 January inviting them to take full advantage of this initiative. A copy of the letter is available in the Library. Ministers and officials have encouraged private sector companies and NHS trusts and health authorities to explore the scope for using private finance to improve and extend NHS services in cost-effective ways. In the next three months Ministers will address a number of conferences on the use of private finance in the NHS. Officials have met finance directors of many NHS trusts to discuss the private finance initiative.

Portable Oxygen Cylinders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received in relation to the supply of portable oxygen cylinders on prescription or via NHS consultants' recommendation; what guidelines she has issued to health authorities in relation to portable oxygen cylinders; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received a number of representations on this matter. There are no plans to allow general practitioners to prescribe portable oxygen cylinders. Hospital consultants will continue to have authority to do so.

NHS Salaries

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the total national health service salary bill was spent on salaries for doctors, nurses, midwives, nursing auxiliaries, pharmacists and administrators in 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Percentage figures based on analyses of annual total salaries and wages costs for hospital and community health services—HCHS—in England, are shown in the table. The figures for 1991-92 are provisional.

HCHS—Analysis of total salaries and wages—percentage figures

Financial year	*Medical staff*	*Nursing and midwifery staff*	*Pharmacists*	*Administrative and clerical staff*	*All other staff*	*Total*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
1975-76	11·6	40·9	0·7	11·6	35·2	100·0
1980-81	12·3	43·7	0·5	11·5	32·0	100·0
1985-86	13·7	45·1	0·6	10·7	29·9	100·0
1990-91	14·1	46·9	0·7	10·6	27·7	100·0
1991-92	14·5	46·0	0·7	11·0	27·8	100·0

Source: Annual accounts (1985-86 and 1990-91) and annual financial returns (1991-92) of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. Annual accounts of area health and other predecessor authorities (1975-76 and 1980-81). Annual financial returns of the first wave NHS trusts (1991-92).

Notes:

1. HCHS covers the total expenditure by the health authorities (and the NHS trusts) including hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
2. The figures are based upon gross pay, including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.
3. The figures for "all other staff" include dental, ambulance, maintenance and professional and technical staff together with all categories of non-NHS (agency, etc.) staff. Those for 1985-86 and later years include general and senior managers.
4. Nursing staff re-gradings and changes in the format of the annual accounts and financial returns over the period do not enable the provision of consistent and separate data for nursing auxiliaries or midwives.
5. The table excludes salaries and wages incurred by family health services authorities and special health authorities providing central services to the NHS. However, the 1975-76 and 1980-81 figures for administrative and clerical staff cover those staff employed by family practitioner committees whose costs were included with those of area health authorities and were not separately identified.

Community Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account was taken in the calculation of the special transitional grant for community care of the financial implications for local authorities of the policy of curtailing payments of residential allowances to care home residents when the resident concerned is away from the care home for more than six days.

Mr. Yeo: No specific account was taken in the calculation of the social security transfer element of the special transitional grant. Data on the numbers likely to be affected are not available. Following a number of representations from hon. Members and other interested parties, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is currently giving careful consideration to all the implications.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

13. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of extending value added tax to domestic fuel on pensioners in the west midlands.

Mr. Nelson: In reaching his Budget decision to extend VAT to supplies of domestic fuel and power, my right hon. Friend took careful account of the impact on all sectors of society. That is why he explained his Budget speech that extra help will be given to poorer pensioners and others on low incomes.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated reduction in domestic fuel consumption as a result of levying VAT at *(a)* 8 per cent. and *(b)* 17½ per cent.; and what is the amount of revenue forgone in VAT receipts on fuel as a result of that reduction.

Sir John Cope: Value added tax at 8 per cent. is expected to reduce demand for domestic fuel and power, in volume terms, by around 1½ per cent. in the short run; VAT at 17½ per cent. by around 3 per cent. in the short run.

In 1993-94 terms, the full year effect of this fall in demand on VAT receipts from domestic fuel and power is estimated to be around £15 million for an 8 per cent. rate of VAT, and around £70 million for a 17½ per cent. rate of VAT.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated revenue obtained from levying VAT at *(a)* 8 per cent. and *(b)* 17½ per cent. on domestic fuel if there were to be no reduction in consumption.

Sir John Cope: Table 4.1 in chapter 4 of the 1993-94 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" provides an estimate of the direct revenue effects from introducing VAT on domestic fuel and power. Had we assumed no change in demand for fuel and power resulting from the measure the estimated revenue effects would have been around £15 million less in 1994-95 and around £5 million less in 1995-96. This takes account of the impact that a lower elasticity would have on demand for other taxable goods.

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many member states of the EC have failed to take the necessary measures to implement the abolition of valued added tax collection on goods crossing frontiers.

Sir John Cope: All EC member states have reported that they have implemented the provisions under the sixth VAT directive for the accounting of VAT on intra-Community movements of goods on acquisition.

14. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations and objections he has received about his proposal to extend the value added tax base announced in his Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the subject.

22. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were value added tax revenues in 1979 and 1992 expressed as a percentage of total indirect and direct tax revenues for those years.

Mr. Dorrell: 12·9 and 19·7 per cent. respectively.

Charities

16. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the overall impact of the Budget on charities.

Mr. Dorrell: The Budget recognised the important position of charities in our national life through the provision of special reliefs. The minimum donation limit under gift aid was lowered from £400 to £250. This will cost £30 million in a full year. The maximum limit for qualifying donations under the payroll giving scheme was raised from £600 to £900 a year at a cost of at least £1 million a year. Special payments for charities were also announced to ease the transition to the new system of tax credits. These payments will cost over £100 million over the four years of the scheme.

Charities will be affected by the increases in excise duties announced in the Budget, and by the extension of VAT to fuel and power used in domestic residential and charity buildings. The Charities' Tax Reform Group estimates that this will cost its members some £27 million in a full year.

Charities with non-domestic premises will benefit from the freezing of real increases in business rates. Charities will also benefit from the decision by the Chancellor to leave charity lotteries untaxed.

Budget

17. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the Budget.

Mr. Portillo: The Budget has been welcomed by many business organisations and individual businesses.

Stamp Duty

18. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the proposed changes to the threshold for stamp duty on houses, land and property.

Mr. Nelson: The increase in the stamp duty threshold has been widely welcomed.

Economic Growth

19. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of his policies will stimulate economic growth and reduce unemployment.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's economic policies are directed to achieving low inflation and sound public

finances, while making markets work better and improving the supply performance of the economy. These are the best means of promoting sustainable economic growth and reducing unemployment.

Taxation (Unemployed People)

20. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average direct and indirect tax burden on a single person in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not available.

Economic Advisers

21. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are employed as economic advisers to the Treasury.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury currently employs 34 full-time and three part-time economic advisers.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

23. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has for sterling in the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Nelson: We have made it clear that we intend to rejoin the ERM, but not before a number of important conditions have been satisfied.

Investment and Unemployment

24. **Mr. Cann:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Budget measures for investment and unemployment levels.

Mr. Portillo: The Budget measures provide further help for business and the unemployed in the early stages of recovery. Together with the autumn statement measures, the improvement in competitiveness from sterling's depreciation, and the recent cuts in interest rates, they provide an excellent environment for investment and exports.

The Government's commitment to sound public finances and low inflation provides a firm foundation for sustainable growth and the lasting creation of new jobs in the medium term.

Exports

25. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the likely level of exports will be by the end of 1993 on present trends; and what was the comparable figure for 1992.

Mr. Portillo: In 1992, the value of non-oil exports was £100 billion. In 1993 I expect them to be over £114 billion, a rise of over 14 per cent.

28. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a further statement about the measures announced in the Budget to assist the growth of exports.

Mr. Lamont: I have responded to requests for support from exporters by cutting export credit premiums and extending the cover available in key markets by £1,300 million over the next three years.

This increase is in addition to the extra £500 million of cover for 1993-94 which I announced in the autumn statement, and means that by 1995-96 the annual allocation of cover will have risen by 75 per cent. since 1991-92. Particular attention will be paid to countries where the prospects for British exports are good, for example Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, South Africa and Malaysia.

For 1993-94, the premiums paid by exporters will be cut by 7½ per cent. on average, compared with the previous year, when premiums were also cut. Average premiums will be over 25 per cent. lower in 1993-94 than in 1991-92.

More generally, exporters will benefit from the cuts in the tax burden on business, such as the reduction in advance corporation tax, improved VAT relief for bad debts and lower rates bills. Small businesses will also benefit from other measures such as the extension of the loan guarantee scheme and changes to VAT and capital gains tax.

Socially Useful Products

26. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since his Budget calling for a review of the list of products classed as socially useful for value added tax purposes.

Mr. Dorrell: I have received a number of representations on VAT. However, there is no such list of products classed as "socially useful for value added tax purposes".

Demand

27. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the level of total demand in the economy.

Mr. Portillo: Real domestic demand rose by 0·5 per cent. between 1991 and 1992. The Budget forecast is for it to increase by 1¼ per cent. in 1993 and 3 per cent. in the year to the first half of 1994. These forecasts are within the range of forecasts produced by the Panel of Independent Forecasters and other outside forecasters.

Bad Debts and Late Payments

29. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what reaction he has received from small businesses to his announcement about value added tax in relation to bad debts and late payments.

Mr. Nelson: I am pleased to say that the significant improvements announced in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget speech have been well received by small businesses.

Alcoholic Drinks

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to achieve harmonisation of duty on alcoholic drinks with other EC countries.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government do not accept that harmonisation of duty rates is necessary.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at Her Majesty's Treasury.

Sir John Cope: Recruits to the senior grades—as to any grade in the civil service—are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the Civil Service Commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including extending links with institutions of higher education; equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; using validated selection procedures.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Her Majesty's Treasury last conducted surveys of *(a)* the ethnic origins and *(b)* women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The Treasury last surveyed staff for whom no record of ethnic origin was held in October 1990. A further survey will be conducted in April 1993. Monitoring information on the numbers and grades of women in the Treasury is produced each month. Latest available figures relate to March 1993.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in Her Majesty's Treasury are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Sir John Cope: The information requested is shown in the table. Figures include those staff on loan outside the Department. Figures for grades 1 to 7 reflect the position as at March 1993. Figures for all staff are for *(a)* as at March 1993; for *(b)* and *(c)* as at 1 January 1993, the latest date for which this information is available. Figures are available only for those staff who are registered as disabled, but the Department does employ a number of people with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Grade	(a) Women		(b) Ethnic minorities		(c) Registered Disabled	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
1 and 1A	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	2	22	—	—	—	—
3	6	18	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	12	14	—	—	—	—
6	—	—	—	—	—	—
7	51	22	4	2	—	—
All staff	782	43	149	7	20	1

Property Owners

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to ease the financial situation of property owners whose mortgages exceed the value of their property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: On 20 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *243*, I announced two measures to help property owners whose mortgages exceed the value of their property. Further details of one of these measures—allowing the security of a new property to be substituted for the previous one without loss of mortgage interest relief—were announced in the Budget and the measure took effect on 16 March.

Alternative Economic Indicators

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research has been undertaken by his Department into the use of *(a)* the United Nations' Development Programme's human development index, *(b)* the Overseas Development Council's physical quality of life indicator and *(c)* Norway's natural resource accounting as alternative economic indicators; and what plans he has to amend economic indicators currently employed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: The Government monitor progress in the development of such economic indicators, but have not themselves commissioned research in the field, and accordingly have no plans to amend the economic indicators currently in use in the United Kingdom.

Employees (Religious Affiliation)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the board of Inland Revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of employees of the board of the Inland Revenue in Northern Ireland is £3,500 based on figures for 1992-93. We are required to undertake monitoring under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, but this monitoring also helps us to assess the effectivenes of our equal opportunities policy.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Commissioners of Customs and Excise.

Sir John Cope: It is estimated that the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Commissioners of Customs and Excise is £2,800, based on figures for 1992-93. The monitoring enables us to comply with our legal obligations under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 and to assess the effectiveness of our equal opportunity policies.

Companies (Losses)

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects agreement in the EC to allow parent companies to assume their subsidiaries' losses in other EC countries.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1990, the Commission proposed a directive concerning arrangements for the taking into account by enterprises of the losses of their permanent

establishments and subsidiaries situated in other member states. This is being considered by a Council working party. Most member states, including the United Kingdom, have major difficulties with the proposals in their current form.

Banking

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many banks and other financial institutions the Bank of England supported *(a)* directly and *(b)* indirectly through other banks and financial institutions in (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992.

Mr. Nelson: It is for the Bank of England to determine its policy on answering questions concerning such matters. The Bank issued a statement last week describing its role during a period following the middle of 1991 in arranging support for a few small banks. A copy of the statement was placed in the Library.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much of the support provided to authorised financial institutions by the Bank of England in 1991 remains outstanding and due to the Bank of England or other institutions;

(2) whether the Bank of England provided guarantees to any other bank or financial institution in respect of support operations designed to assist authorised banking institutions during the course of 1991;

(3) what was the value of the support provided *(a)* directly and *(b)* indirectly to authorised banking institutions by the Bank of England in 1991; and what was the source of that support;

(4) whether the Bank of England provided support arrangements in 1991 for any authorised banking institution that was not incorporated in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: It is for the Bank of England to determine its policy on answering questions concerning such matters.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the support operations by the Bank of England in respect of authorised banking institutions.

Mr. Nelson: No.

Pools Betting Levy

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to alter the present situation in relation to the pools betting levy in relation to funding for implementation of the Taylor committee report via the Football Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: In the 1990 Budget pool betting duty was reduced from 42·5 to 40 per cent. for five years to help finance the implementation of the Taylor report and in particular the achievement of all-seating. We have since made it clear that we will be prepared to extend the reduction to the year 2000, provided the Football Leagues and football clubs produce satisfactory financial plans for their own contribution to further necessary ground improvements. We are currently awaiting reports on the clubs' plans.

Tax Payments

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effective date of payment will be allowed when payment of tax to the Inland Revenue is made by electronic funds transfer.

Mr. Dorrell: From today, where a payment of tax is made by electronic funds transfer, an effective date of payment of the tax of one working day immediately before the date value is received by the Inland Revenue will be allowed.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Lamont: The potential scope of the initiative will vary between Departments. Further to my earlier reply to my right hon. Friend on this subject, 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *377*, my Department will consider the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December and the further published guidance on contract energy management—17 February 1993—and joint ventures—16 March 1993—whenever the opportunity arises.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many pages of evidence Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has given to the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Portillo: About 11,200.

Domestic Fuel

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for estimated domestic fuel expenditure by households on *(a)* average and *(b)* 50 per cent. of average incomes, giving figures separately for expenditure on (i) oil, (ii) piped gas, (iii) cylinder gas, (iv) electricity and (v) coal.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* The following estimates are derived from the 1991 family expenditure survey. The estimates are based on samples of 200 households grouped at each level of income. Because of the small sample size the figures are subject to considerable sampling variations. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10p.

Per week

	Average income £	*50 per cent. of average income* £
i. Oil	0·30	0·20
ii. Piped gas	5·10	4·00
iii. Cylinder gas and other fuels[1]	0·30	0·10
iv. Electricity	6·20	6·40
v. Coal and coke	0·20	0·80

[1] Includes calor gas plus paraffin, firelighters, firewood, gas refills for blow lamps/camping stoves, underfloor heating where source of heat is unknown and services for fuel included in rent.

Income Tax Cuts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, columns *129-30*, if he will estimate the number of taxpayers who have benefited from the reduction in personal income tax introduced by the Finance Act 1988 in each region in each year.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* Information is given in the table.

Number of taxpayers benefiting from abolition of rates in excess of 40 per cent. (thousands)

Region of residence of taxpayer	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*[2]
North	20	20	30
Yorkshire and Humberside	50	60	80
North West	60	80	90
East Midlands	40	60	60
West Midlands	60	60	80
East Anglia	30	30	50
South East	490	530	630
South West	70	60	80
Wales	20	30	30
Scotland	50	70	80
Northern Ireland	10	10	20
United Kingdom[1]	930	1,030	1,240

[1] Includes members of the forces and Merchant Navy and a small number of civil servants serving overseas who are not allocated to regions.

[2] For 1990-91 the figures relate to the number of taxpaying individuals following the introduction of independent taxation.

PRIME MINISTER

Regional Government

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards regional government for England.

The Prime Minister: We see no case for setting up regional authorities in England. Our aim is to simplify and streamline local government, not to impose an additional layer of bureaucracy on local taxpayers.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister how many times he has visited Liverpool since he became Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I have visited the north-west on a number of occasions since becoming Prime Minister.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 1 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

European Court

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *283*, what was the average length of time that elapsed between the European Court of Justice finding that Her Majesty's Government were in breach of its obligations under EC directives and the necessary steps being taken to rectify matters; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 31 March 1993]:* Four cases were referred to in my previous reply in which the United Kingdom was held by the European Court of Justice to be in breach of EC directives. Three of these cases required legislative action to give full effect to the judgment of the Court; this took between six and 14 months to complete. In the fourth case, concerning a breach of directive 80/788—drinking water—when judgment was delivered on 25 November 1992 the UK had already complied on two of the points on which it was found to be in breach. Action on the remaining two points is in hand.

Prime Minister's Office

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will give figures for *(a)* the number of staff and *(b)* the cost of the Prime Minister's office for each year since 1979;

(2) why the cost and size of the Prime Minister's office are not separately identified in Cm 2218 the "Government's Expenditure Plans, 1993-94 to 1995-96"; and if he will provide figures for its cost and size.

The Prime Minister: It has not been the general practice to identify the cost of Ministers' offices separately in departmental reports. The cost and size of my office are freely available in the form of parliamentary answers. The information for each year since 1979-80 is as follows:

	Staff[1]	*Cost*[2,3] *(£'000)*
1979-80	68	1,409
1980-81	68	1,745
1981-82	70	2,415
1982-83	64	2,700
1983-84	66	3,026
1984-85	67	3,787
1985-86	66	4,406
1986-87	66	4,963
1987-88	67	5,418
1988-89	67	6,554
1989-90	68	7,669
1990-91	71	8,226
1991-92	73	8,664
1992-93	95	[4]9,136

[1] The staffing levels relate to the beginning of each financial year. For the years 1979 to 1989 the figures relate to the number of actual staff employed in No. 10. From 1990 onwards the figures are on the basis of staff in post (ie expressed in terms of full time equivalents). It should be noted that the increase in staff numbers from 1 April 1992 is due to the transfer of office service support grades, already working in No. 10, to the No. 10 complement from the Cabinet Office establishment officer's group.

[2] The monetary figures represent the cost of 10 Downing Street and Chequers borne on the Votes of the Cabinet Office (OPSS) and its predecessors. Over the period, the following changes have occurred to the basis of the costs:

in 1981-82 the Ministry of Defence introduced charges for the use of its aircraft;

in 1983-84 the then Property Services Agency introduced charges for buildings and services;

in 1984-85 charges were introduced for the Government Car Service and the Service Personnel at Chequers; and

in 1986-87 the cost of office services was included for the first time.

[3] Costs are shown in the year in which the expenditure was made. Because of billing delays this is not always in financial year in which the goods or services were provided.

[4] Estimate.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Posts

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, *Official Report*, columns *593-94*, how many staff are employed by each other member state of the European Community in each diplomatic post in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The numbers of overseas-based staff are as follows:

Country	*Number*
Germany	
London	131
Edinburgh	15
Manchester	10
Total	156
Greece	
London	68
Total	68

Country	Number
Irish Republic	
London	59
Total	59
Luxembourg	
London	2
Total	2
Portugal	
London	67
Total	67
Belgium	
London	46
Birmingham	3
Edinburgh	2
Total	51
Denmark	
London	26
Total	26
France	
London	242
Edinburgh	18
Total	260
Italy	
London	149
Bedford	5
Edinburgh	12
Manchester	19
Total	185
Netherlands	
London	54
Total	54
Spain	
London	161
Edinburgh	7
Manchester	12
Total	180

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has had with non-governmental organisations concerning the first preparatory committee meeting of the non-proliferation treaty; what plans his Department has to involve non-governmental organisations in its activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 15 February at column *33*

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Goodlad: The potential scope of the initiative will vary between departments. In the case of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, diplomatic wing, we have not so far identified any proposals relevant to the initiative.

The Commonwealth Development Corporation, for which the Overseas Development Administration is the sponsor department, funds projects in developing countries, particularly in the private sector in partnership with a range of co-investors. The Administration has two arrangements which already associate private finance with aid funds: the joint funding scheme which matches contributions from non-governmental organisations on a pound-for-pound basis, and the aid and trade provision which provides aid funds to recipient Governments in association with commercial funds though these are usually supported by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

We will continue to look for suitable proposals.

Human Rights

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom will be represented at the United Nations conference on human rights to be held in Vienna on 14 to 18 June; who will be in the delegation; what criteria will be used for the selection of United Kingdom delegates; and what guidelines delegates will be given.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall be represented at the second world conference on human rights in Vienna, from 14 to 25 June, by a delegation consisting of Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials with expertise in the field of human rights, including the United Kingdom permanent representative to the United Nations at Geneva, and representatives of interested dependent territories. It will be led by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or myself. The aims of the delegation are to promote universal adherence to existing standards, to explore ways to improve their implementation, and to examine the relationship between human rights, democracy and development.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to prepare draft operating regulations and fiscal arrangements in advance of an exclusive licensing round in the Falklands designated area.

Mr. Garel-Jones: These matters will be given consideration. Further legislation would of course be required for an exclusive licensing round.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preliminary information his Department is providing to oil companies regarding possible operating regulations and fiscal regimes for oil developers in the Falklands development area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The South Atlantic and Antarctic department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office issued a letter on 17 March which set out our expectations on a future licensing round and the fiscal regime which would apply to companies exploiting any hydrocarbons which may be found in the Falklands designated area. It will provide further guidance as appropriate.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take to encourage oil company participation in the current phase of exploration of the Falklands designated area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The financial participation of oil companies in the seismic surveys now being carried out is a commercial matter. The South Atlantic and Antarctic department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will supplement as appropriate the guidance given in its letter of 17 March to the seismic contractors.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he proposes to announce the opening and closing dates of an exclusive licensing round in the Falklands designated area.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The letter of 17 March from the South Atlantic and Antarctic department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to seismic companies said that the licensing round would probably close within two to three years from now. We would expect an announcement of opening and closing dates to be made in due course.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to respond directly to the Argentine Government in respect of the letter sent by the Argentine Government to oil companies, reasserting a claim to sovereignty of the Falkland islands and surrounding waters.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Shamrock (GB) Ltd.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, columns *215-16*, to the right hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), how many employees at Shamrock (GB) Ltd. have now received training in the wider ethical and legal issues associated with animal use; what communications between the management and the Home Office inspectorate have taken place since 2 December 1992 to agree the nature and context of training; and if he will visit the company to see what progress has been made with the training.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A training programme for employees of Shamrock (GB) Ltd. began this week and will be completed within the next three months. The Home Office inspectorate met the management of Shamrock on 3 December 1992, 21 January and 10 March 1993 and the management wrote to the Home Office inspectorate once.

On 17 March, I visited the company to establish what progress had been accomplished during the 15 weeks since my reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler). On 23 March I discussed my findings with Home Office officials. On 24 and 25 March, I sought further advice from individual members of the Animal Procedures Committee. On 26 March, the managing director of Shamrock met me to agree the details of the content and conduct of a comprehensive training programme and of the programme to improve and replace facilities. On 31 March, the first training session for all employees was conducted by Mrs. Judy McArthur Clark, president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions have been issued to immigration offices regarding the scrutiny of applications to remain in Britain on the basis of marriage within the last six months; on what grounds; and to which countries' nationals they apply.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Criminal Courts (Videos)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the use in criminal courts in England of video footage filmed from helicopters.

Mr. Jack: The admissibility of this type of evidence is a matter for a court to decide in any given case.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department is continuing to examine the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested in the published Treasury guidance.

Nuclear Weapon Transportation

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many national institutions, local authorities and other interested organisations received copies of Home Office circular ES1/1993—"Local Authority and Emergency Service Information on Nuclear Weapon Transportation Contingency Plans"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Home Office circular ES1/1993 was distributed in England and Wales to:

Chief Executive of County Councils, District Councils and London Borough Councils
The Town Clerk, City of London
Clerks to the Fire and Civil Defence Authorities
Chief Officers of Police
Chief Fire Officers
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
London Boroughs Association
Association of Chief Police Officers
Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association
County Emergency Planning Officers Society
Emergency Planning Association
Institute of Civil Defence and Disaster Studies
Society of Industrial Emergency Services Officers
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

The guidance was distributed by the Home Office on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

Motor Vehicles

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of motor vehicles purchased by the police, by the fire service and by the civil defence authorities were built or assembled in Britain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The vehicles for these services are all purchased locally. The Home Office does not keep records of the numbers, make, models or country of origin of vehicles purchased by these forces and could obtain such information only at disproportionate cost.

European Elections (Constituencies)

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 8 February, *Official Report*, column *424*, when the boundary commission was instructed to produce proposals for distributing the additional European Parliament seats; when he expects to receive the proposals; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the time available for their implementation before the next European elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The boundary commisions has at present no power to undertake a review of boundaries to accommodate the six additional seats.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he will make for the additional European parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are currently formulating proposals for accommodating the six extra seats, and when we have done so we will consult the Opposition parties.

Unit Fines

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to change the unit fine system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The operation of the unit fine scheme is being very carefully monitored and we will be considering whether any change is called for in the light of practical experience of its operation.

Murder by Children

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children were found guilty of the murder of another child in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Jack: The number of suspects aged under 16 convicted of murder of a victim aged under 16 for the years 1982-91 is in the table. Information for the years requested before 1982 is not available except at disproportionate cost and information for 1992 is not yet available.

Year	*Number*
1982	4
1983	2
1984	1
1985	—
1986	1
1987	1
1988	1
1989	1
1990	—
1991	—

Cricketers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cricketers granted work permits in 1992 by the overseas labour section of the Department of Employment to play cricket in the United Kingdom failed to return to their country of origin on or before the expiry of their work permit; how many such individuals are believed still to be in the United Kingdom; and how many, to date, have been removed from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Cricketers are not identified separately in Department of Employment or Home Office statistics.

Fire Regulations

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of whether existing fire regulations are being implemented properly.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is the responsibility of local authorities to implement and enforce fire safety legislation. This includes work carried out under section 1(1)(f) of the Fire Service Act 1947, whereby fire authorities are required to give fire prevention advice, and enforcement of the statutory requirements of the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

Members of Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate report annually on individual fire brigades. Each report is published and contains detailed information on the performance of the brigade's fire safety department. On the basis of the information contained in these reports, we are content that they are discharging their statutory obligations satisfactorily.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the cost to British industry of the implementation of existing fire regulations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Fire safety legislation exists to protect people from the effects of fire. Current statutory requirements are contained in a wide range of national and local legislation, some of which has existed for many years. Figures are not available for the costs of implementing these requirements.

Intimidation of Witnesses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has had about cases of intimidation of witnesses in major crime trials; and what proposals he has to combat this intimidation.

Mr. Jack: The Government are aware of concern about the intimidation of witnesses in criminal trials and occasionally receives representations both on the general issue and in relation to specific cases. Such intimidation amounts to a serious criminal offence punishable by a

maximum of life imprisonment. The investigation of alleged offences and, where necessary, the protection of witnesses, are operational matters for the chief officer of the police force concerned.

I also refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) on 28 January at column *789*, and to the replies given to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 15 March at columns *41* and *68*.

Prison Service

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what change he is making in the status of the Prison Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Prison Service becomes an executive agency of the Home Office with effect from 1 April. Its director general, Derek Lewis, is the chief executive of the agency and will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the service.

I have set the following key targets for 1993-94, which are published in the Prison Service's business plan:

1. To ensure that the number of escapes from prison establishments and from escorts, expressed as a percentage of the average prison population, is fewer than in 1992-93.
2. To reverse, over the period of the corporate plan, the rising trend of assaults on staff, prisoners and others, expressed as a percentage of the average prison population.
3. To ensure that by 31 March 1994 no prisoner is held three to a cell in accommodation which is intended for one prisoner, subject to ensuring that no prisoners are held in police cells unless this is absolutely unavoidable.
4. To provide 24-hour access to sanitation in at least 4,700 more prison places, excluding new and renovated accommodation, as part of the programme to provide all prisoners with this facility by 31 December 1994.
5. To ensure that prisoners spend, on average, at least 3 per cent. more hours a week in purposeful activity, resulting in an average of 24·9 hours per week per prisoner.
6. To ensure that by 31 March 1994 at least 34 per cent. of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for a total of at least 12 hours on weekdays.
7. To ensure that by 31 March 1994 at least 90 per cent. of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners have the opportunity to exceed the minimum visiting entitlement.
8. To ensure that the average cost per prisoner place does not exceed £23,561.

I am placing in the Library copies of the Prison Service's framework document, corporate plan, business plan and a statement of citizens charter standards of service.

SCOTLAND

Craft Funding

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will, following the transfer of responsibility for the Scottish Arts Council to the Scottish Office, consider arranging funding for crafts in Scotland directly with the Scottish Arts Council rather than via the Crafts Council in England.

Mr. Lang: I am still considering the respective roles of the Scottish Arts Council and the Crafts Council in providing support to individual craft makers in Scotland and will announce my decision shortly.

Council House Repairs

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish for each local authority *(a)* the amount spent on council house repairs and maintenance, *(b)* the number of council-owned properties and *(c)* the average spent on repairs and maintenance per council-owned property in the latest available year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested relating to 1991-92 is set out in the table.

Local authority	*(a)* £	[1]*(b)*	*(c)* £
Berwickshire	483,359	2,243	215·50
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,150,963	3,669	313·70
Roxburgh	1,483,856	4,888	303·57
Tweeddale	408,743	1,337	305·72
Clackmannan	2,419,657	7,893	306·56
Falkirk	9,241,951	26,599	347·45
Stirling	2,473,007	10,474	236·11
Annandale and Eskdale	862,798	4,454	193·71
Nithsdale	1,885,427	6,627	284·51
Stewartry	465,268	2,199	211·58
Wigtown	1,101,823	3,985	276·49
Dunfermline	6,425,326	16,961	378·83
Kirkcaldy	7,526,942	20,635	364·77
North East Fife	2,657,892	5,700	466·30
Aberdeen	12,837,155	35,023	366·53
Banff and Buchan	3,072,135	10,651	288·44
Gordon	1,081,276	5,425	199·31
Kincardine and Deeside	556,932	3,532	157·68
Moray	2,954,003	9,190	321·44
Badenoch and Strathspey	140,026	982	142·59
Caithness	1,087,148	3,673	295·98
Inverness	2,266,145	6,236	363·40
Lochaber	780,153	2,529	308·48
Nairn	255,270	1,057	241·50
Ross and Cromarty	1,101,085	5,825	189·03
Skye and Lochalsh	259,917	812	320·09
Sutherland	437,928	1,735	252·41
East Lothian	3,188,986	12,352	258·18
Edinburgh	16,176,753	40,856	395·95
Midlothian	3,080,600	9,481	324·92
West Lothian	5,622,961	17,850	315·01
Argyll and Bute	1,381,363	7,258	190·32
Bearsden and Milngavie	381,564	1,540	247·77
Clydebank	3,809,927	9,177	415·16
Clydesdale	5,170,396	8,264	625·65
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,405,435	3,562	394·56
Cumnock and Doon Valley	4,074,014	8,762	464·96
Cunninghame	8,149,988	19,104	426·61
Dumbarton	4,200,572	10,345	406·05
East Kilbride	295,738	1,110	266·43
Eastwood	520,434	1,656	314·27
Glasgow	58,977,024	144,661	407·69
Hamilton	7,044,791	18,892	372·90
Inverclyde	7,586,574	17,028	445·54
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5,612,640	14,307	392·30
Kyle and Carrick	4,851,910	14,141	343·11
Monklands	11,206,579	24,288	461·40
Motherwell	11,778,574	33,896	347·49
Renfrew	12,470,384	31,641	394·12
Strathkelvin	2,918·623	8,431	346·18
Angus	3,131,572	11,756	266·38
Dundee	14,581,254	30,948	471·15
Perth and Kinross	3,953,693	12,592	313·98
Orkney	458·495	1,290	355·42
Shetland	3,278,702	2,556	1,282·75
Western Isles	828,898	2,322	356·98
Scotland	271,554,629	724,400	374·87

Source: Local authority HSG1 returns made to the Scottish Office Environment Department

[1] Council housing stock as at 30 September 1991

Coastal Pollution (Sewage)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what amount of sewage sludge has been discharged into the sea near the Firth of Clyde and elsewhere off the coast of Scotland in each of the past five years; what consultations have taken place concerning alternative methods of disposal; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The practice of discharging small quantities of sewage sludge from pipelines into coastal waters is only adopted in a few isolated areas where alternative arrangements are impracticable. It will be phased out completely by the end of 1998. Information is not held centrally about the small amount involved.

However, sludge dumping from ships, which will also be phased out by the end of 1998, accounts for some 75 per cent. of Scotland's sewage sludge disposal. The quantities involved are shown in the table.

Strathclyde regional council and Lothian regional council are the only Scottish authorities which dispose of sewage sludge by dumping at sea. Both have received consultants' reports on the options available to them after 1998. I understand that Lothian regional council is developing proposals based on incineration, whereas Strathclyde regional council favours land-based disposal routes involving agricultural land, forestry and land reclamation. Strathclyde regional council has embarked on a series of public awareness meetings to publicise its strategy.

	Firth of Clyde tonnes	*Elsewhere* tonnes
1988	1,755,633	249,330
1989	1,693,000	247,575
1990	1,671,500	272,105
1991	1,698,500	285,535
1992	1,686,000	298,525

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Lang: The Government's initiative is an important opportunity to capitalise both on the financial resources of the private sector and also its skills, for the provision of important projects and services. I am looking to make the maximum use of the opportunities it provides.

A number of ventures in Scotland are being designed to take advantage of the new arrangements which encourage co-operation between the public and private sectors.

Significant steps to improve transport links through private sector involvement have been taken with the appointment of consultants for two major projects: first, to define the terms of the competition for construction of the central Scotland fastlink scheme between Douglas on the new M6 and Whitburn on the M8, and secondly to conduct feasibility studies on the development of transport links around the firth of Forth, including a second Forth road bridge. The Forth study also endorses the development of a light rapid transit or busway from Edinburgh airport to central Edinburgh and consultants are examining the scope for private finance in this venture.

A consultation document entitled "Where Now?" was recently published, with the purpose of stimulating private sector interest in the provision of in-car traffic control and information systems in Scotland.

The potential for involving private finance in other areas is also being examined. In particular, there may be possibilities for attracting private sector investment in health, higher and further education and government property. The management executive of the national health service has issued information on the initiative to health boards and NHS trusts in Scotland and encouraged them to consider actively how to make full use of the opportunities offered. From 1 April, Scottish higher education institutions will, with the approval of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, be able to borrow on the security of Exchequer-funded assets to finance capital developments. Guidance on the procedures which apply have been issued to institutions by the funding council.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress in constructing trunk road schemes during 1992-93 and on the schemes the Government propose to start in Scotland in the next three financial years.

Mr. Lang: The publication of "Roads, Traffic and Safety 1992" in March last year set out in detail our policies for developing and improving the trunk road network. In the recent and current period the emphasis of major projects is on:

(1) completion of the A9 Perth-Sterling dualling;
(2) completion of an M90/A90 Edinburgh-Aberdeen arterial route;
(3) upgrading of the A74 to motorway.

Projects are currently being prepared to permit in the medium term:

(1) completion of M80 Glasgow-Stirling motorway;
(2) completion of M8 Edinburgh-Glasgow motorway;
(3) completion of M77 Glasgow-Kilmarnock motorway;
(4) completion of M6 Carlisle-Glasgow motorway;
(5) Central Scotland Fastlink (to link M6 at Douglas with M8 at Whitburn);
(6) completion of A1 Edinburgh-Dunbar to near motorway standard and dualling schemes between Dunbar and the Border;
(7) integrated roads and transport provision around the Firth of Forth.

This is an ambitious programme requiring very substantial investment.

Significant progress has already been made. Five major schemes with a total value in excess of £125 million were completed during 1992-93. These were:

A74(M)	Elvanfoot to Paddy's Rickle Bridge
A74(M)	Kirkpatrick Fleming to Gretna
M80	Stepps Bypass
A9	Greenloaning to Blackford
A1	Tower to Dunglass

In the course of 1992-93, some 15 major schemes—each with a cost of more than £3 million—were either under way or started. These schemes had a total value in excess of £380 million. They include seven schemes valued at £180 million to upgrade the A74 to motorway. As a result, over 65 per cent. of the Scottish upgrading, which will lead to an extension of the M6 motorway from Carlisle to

Glasgow, is now either completed or underway. The final two schemes on the Perth to Aberdeen route were also started and are now well under way. These schemes will complete the upgrading of this key road to dual carriageway providing a high quality link from the north east to the motorway network. On completion, this route will be designated by a single M90/A90 Edinburgh-Aberdeen route number in place of the five route numbers at present. The opening in 1992-93 of the A9 Greenloaning-Blackford scheme also brought with it the full completion of the A9 Perth-Stirling dualling.

The additional £8·5 million I was able to announce in December 1992 for the roads programme in Scotland allowed me to bring forward into the financial year 1992-93 further major schemes. The schemes costing over £3 million started since 1 April 1992 are as follows:

A74(M)	Lockerbie Bypass (Muirhouse to Water of Milk)
A74(M)	Water of Milk to Ecclefechan
A74(M)	Eaglesfield to Kirkpatrick Fleming
A74(M)	Dinwoodie Green to Muirhouse
A74(M)	Cleuchbrae to Dinwoodie Green
A74(M)	Ecclefechan to Eaglesfield Phase 1
A94	Brechin Bypass (dualling)
A830	Morar Bypass (Lochan Doilead to Kinsadel)
A87	Skye Bridge Approach Roads
A9	Broomhill to Logie Easter

These schemes have a total value of almost £190 million. As well as the publicly funded schemes, private finance also additionally allowed the start of construction of the Skye bridge.

I am now able to announce those major schemes with an estimated cost of over £3 million each which are expected to start between 1 April, 1993 and 31 March, 1996:

1993-94	
M8	Newbridge to Edinburgh
M77	Ayr Road Route (trunk road section)
A74(M)	Ecclefechan to Eaglesfield Phase II

1994-95 and 1995-96	
A1	Tranent to Haddington
M8	North Lanarkshire Stage 1
M77	Fenwick to B764
A74(M)	Beattock to Cleuchbrae
A96	Kintore Bypass
A96	Keith Bypass
A828	Creagan Bridge

These schemes have a total value approaching £290 million.

Our plans are, of course, subject to schemes satisfying the usual value for money criteria together with satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the necessary preparatory work.

In addition to the major starts, funding for route action plans, road safety and other schemes has been substantially increased. This will allow work on the A76 Kilmarnock-Dumfries route and on the A9 Perth-Thurso route to be taken forward and continue the excellent progress which has already been made on the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness; the A85 Perth to Dundee; and the A7 from Hawick southwards.

Quangos

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* chairmen/women, *(b)* vice-chairmen/women and *(c)* the members of each of the boards of quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations over which he has direct control; if he will indicate which of the appointments are part-time; and if he will list the date when each appointment is due to be renewed.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* As the information sought is extensive, I have arranged for a copy of the information sought by the hon. Member to be placed in the Library of the House. It shows as at 1 September 1992 the name of the body, the appointees to that body, their rank, the expiry date of the appointment where it is of a fixed term and whether it is a full-time or part-time appointment. Information on appointments to JP advisory committees and children's panels is limited to chairmen and deputy chairmen, as information on members is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Forestry Enterprise

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Forestry Enterprise assets currently for sale and those he expects to dispose of before 1995.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 19 March 1993]:* The areas of forest land currently being offered for sale by the Forestry Commission on the open market are given in the table. It is not possible to predict which areas will be sold before 1995.

County/Region and Name	*Area (hectares)*
ENGLAND	
Avon	
Abbots Wood (East)	1
East Tandit	6
Fifty Acre Wood	21
Old Park Wood	10
Round Hill Clump	2
Scutches	5
Three Corner Wood	3
Warren House	3
West Tandit/Ox House	16
Wraxall	13
Yewtree/Snakes Well/Fishpond	11
Cornwall	
Hay Wood	54
Penance and Derry's	7
Treworgey	17
Cumbria	
Walton Wood	89
Devon	
Brownsham Woods	70
Deershill Wood	11
Hawkmore	22
New Park Coppice	15
Durham	
Stanley Woods	64
Hampshire	
Ashe Park Wood	37
Peaky Close	23
Roke Mead Copse	9
Woodham House Copse	5
Humberside	
Sutton	34
Lincolnshire	
Wraby Wood	70

County/Region and Name	Area (hectares)
Norfolk	
Blackwater Plantation	4
Northumberland	
Colley Law	8
Corbies Crags Woods	54
Haydon Fell	20
North Yorkshire	
Averhams Wood	52
Black Plantation	14
Fishpond Wood	6
Raisdale	180
Seaton Old Wood	5
Turf Graft Wood	3
West Gateforth	47
Shropshire	
Coed Detton	14
Preston Springs	38
Somerset	
Denny Wood	2
Ellicombe Common	2
Fry's Wood	24
Higher Bitcombe	30
West Wood	9
South Yorkshire	
Green Springs	12
The Old Park	41
Walker Wood	6
Suffolk	
Langley High Wood	49
West Sussex	
Sparnwood and Swear Hanger	12
Wephurst Wood	38
Wiltshire	
Roundway Hill Covert	27
SCOTLAND	
Borders	
Lumsdain	47
Soutra	156
Soutra Exchange	25
Tweedsmuir Woodlands 2	2,191
Central	
Easter Muirhead	35
Ross Priory	71
Dumfries and Galloway	
Barcloah	44
Cally Mains (land at)	4
Galloway Package	35
Glaik	63
Lochnaw Estate (part)	41
Lochnaw (part)	36
South Aldouran	16
Grampian	
Aldlair	3
Barlatch	3
Drakemyres	32
Goval Wood	19
Haremoss	19
Hillend Moss	16
Kinnoir	9
Knock Hill Wood	56
Longhill	120
Mormond Hill	255
New Pitsligo (8 lots)	103
Redmoss	46
Rora Moss	136

County/Region and Name	Area (hectares)
Highland	
Arboll Wood	18
Badar Dhonnadh	80
Balgoil Belt	5
Blackwood	65
Corriemulzie	222
Duntelchaig	90
Eiden Wood	44
Factors Wood	15
Glencripesdale	1,859
Station Wood	38
Strathclyde	
Ballimony and Dunlossit	1,300
Barcaldine Castle Moss	64
Bunessan	102
Carrick	2
Curra Lochan	20
Daljarrock	52
Dalsmirren (part)	1,094
Drimsynie (land at)	8
Garrochoran	197
Kilgrammie	113
Scour and Beach	1,710
Tarnurich Beechwood	2
Troloss	18
Tayside	
High Wood	53
Muir of Pert	82
The Lair and Dalnoid	73
WALES	
Dyfed	
Allt Crychdu	18
Allt Fawr	7
Allt Gwernfelen	16
Allt Llwyn Dyfrion	11
Allt Pistyll Dewi	33
Allt Pwll Priddog	18
Allt y Fergwm	23
Brist Coed	5
Bwlch Newydd	8
Bylchau Duon	62
Cae Sarah	4
Cefn Eithin	5
Cilfowyr	3
Coed Cefn Pwll Hen	20
Coed Cymllwyfog	15
Coed Ffridd Cwmere	20
Coedgae Sara	5
Coed Gwastad	28
Coedmore, Coed Newydd	17
Coed Weddus	5
Coed y Gorof	7
Cwmbran Wood	9
Cwnheidre Uchaf	24
Fforest	22
Ffynon Lefrith	25
Glanteifi	3
Glaspant	4
Glebe Woods	17
Hafod Iwan	32
Knightson Bottom	15
Llwyn y Gwair	14
Lon Isaf	7
Pant y Gaseg	3
Pencwm Fawr	9
Penhill Wood	4
Penrallt Ddu	13
Pont Eynon and Allt y Forlan	29
Pont Henri	14
Portis Pant	30
Quarry Wood	7
Rams Wood	26
Scolton	30

County/Region and Name	Area (hectares)
Troserch	35
Tynton Wood	4
Ty'r Shyme	7
Waun Bagian Woods	26
Wenallt	17
Gwent	
Craig y Merchant	24
Hafood Risclawdd	23
Tyllys	12
Gwyned	
Coed Dyfi	17
Coed Ty Uchaf	15
Glyn Estate	49
Powys	
Allt Cwm Tywyll	6
Crai Yr Henffordd	8
Cwmbach and Cwmcoch	44
Great Wood	9
Pwll Llydan	31
South Glamorgan	
Breach Wood	9
West Glamorgan	
Craig Ynysgollen	10
Gelligaer	33

Hong Kong

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase the budget and staffing of Scottish Enterprise's office in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Scottish Enterprise does not itself have an office in Hong Kong. However, the joint Scottish Office/Scottish Enterprise inward investment bureau, Locate in Scotland, operates a one-man office there. There are no plans at present to increase the budget or staffing of this office.

Shetland (Oil Spill)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *597*, when he expects the marine nature conservation review team to conclude its assessment of its visit to Shetland; and if he will put a copy of the assessment in the Library.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 31 March 1993]:* An initial impact assessment bulletin on the oil spill and severe weather conditions during January will be issued by Scottish Natural Heritage in April on request. This will give details of the effects on the marine biota in south Shetland, together with analysis of the effects on the earth science interest in coastal sites of special scientific interest in the area. The final report of the joint team of marine biologists from SNH, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee support unit is also expected in April. Copies of both reports will be placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Mates: The Northern Ireland civil service and the home civil service are equal opportunity employers and welcome applications from men and women, irrespective of their religion, disability or ethnic origin. Recruitment to the senior grades of the home civil service and the Northern Ireland civil service is on the basis of merit in fair and open competition. Both are members of Opportunity 2000, and the Northern Ireland civil service has set itself a voluntary goal of increasing the proportion of women in the senior general service, grade 5 and above, to 10 per cent. by 31 December 1998.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when his Department last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The Northern Ireland Office, home civil service, last conducted a complete survey of the ethnic origins of all staff in 1988; the data have been updated as and when staff have joined the Department. The number of women in post can be surveyed by means of the personnel information system at any appropriate time.

Compositional analysis of the Northern Ireland civil service by religion, sex and disability is a regular feature of the work of its equal opportunities unit. Particular surveys to establish the number of female staff are not required. The Northern Ireland civil service does not monitor the ethnic origin of staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Mates: At 1 January 1993 there were 114 female staff in the Northern Ireland Office, home civil service, which represents 50 per cent. of the Department. The number in grades 1 to 7 was as follows:

Grade	Number	Percentage
1	0	—
2	0	—
3	0	—
4	0	—
5	0	—
6	0	—
7	4	17

A total of 14 per cent. of the Department are from the ethnic minorities—London only—and none of the staff is registered disabled.

At 1 January 1992 there were 12,661 female staff in the Northern Ireland civil service, which is 43 per cent. of the service. There were 431, 1·5 per cent., who were, or had been registered as disabled. The Northern Ireland civil service does not monitor the ethnic origin of its staff.

The number and percentage of female staff and staff with disabilities in each grade, 1 to 7, was:

Grade	Number of females	Percentage female	Number who self-reported a disability (SRD)	Percentage SRD	Number registered as disabled (RD)	Percentage RD
1	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	1	2·4	1	2·4	1	2·4
4	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	14	7·4	5	2·6	—	—
6	60	17·2	13	3·7	3	0·9
7	81	9·7	22	2·6	3	0·4

In addition, 64 registered disabled people are currently working in the Northern Ireland civil service under the sheltered placement scheme.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will authorise legal support for individual members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who have been falsely accused in future action for damages against their false accusers.

Mr. Mates: No. It is appropriately the relevant police staff associations who provide legal support for their members at disciplinary hearings and for other relevant matters, or individual officers may make their own arrangements. However, the police authority for Northern Ireland does provide financial assistance to members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who intend issuing defamation proceedings, in accordance with set criteria which also apply to forces in Great Britain.

VAT (Fuel and Power)

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps his Department will take to ensure that those on low incomes who do not qualify for social security payments are able to meet the extra costs of fuel bills after the value added tax increases have been applied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear in his Budget statement, extra help will be available to those dependent on income-related benefits. This will be paid from 1 April 1994 and will be in addition to the automatic increases in benefits to reflect the impact of the increases in fuel bills on the retail prices index.

Wasting Police Time

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prosecutions have been initiated against persons in Northern Ireland who have been responsible for wasting police time in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mates: The requested information is as follows:

Year	Number
1988	8
1989	21
1990	4
1991	6
1992	3

Paramilitaries

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been killed by *(a)* republican paramilitaries and *(b)* loyalist paramilitaries over the last 20 years; and if he will give details by constituency.

Mr. Mates: From the information available it is believed that over 2,600 people have been killed as a result of the actions of terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland during the period from 1969 to 1992. It is not known in every case precisely which paramilitary organisation was responsible, but it is likely that 69 per cent. of deaths involved republican groups and 31 per cent. involved loyalist groups. It is not possible to provide this information by constituency without disproportionate cost.

Newtownabbey RUC Station

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many reported crimes have been recorded at Newtownabbey RUC station in each of the last three years; and how many prosecutions have taken place in respect of reported crimes.

Mr. Mates: The total number of crimes reported and detected in the Newtownabbey station and sub-divisional areas during the last three years is as follows:

Year	Newtownabbey Station Area		Newtownabbey Sub-divisional Area	
	Number of crimes recorded	[1]Number of crimes detected	Number of crimes recorded	[1]Number of crimes detected
1990	1,153	539	2,867	1,246
1991	1,188	470	3,007	1,187
1992	1,411	499	3,290	1,178

[1] The number of crimes detected for each year may include crimes recorded/committed in previous year.

Figures in respect of prosecutions are available only by sub-divisional area and are as follows:

Year	Persons proceeded against
1990	403
1991	372
1992	409

Notes:

1. The statistics shown refer to the area in which the crime was

committed and not necessarily the area where the person proceeded against resided.
2. One person may be proceeded against for more than one offence or a number of persons may be convicted in relation to one offence.
3. The figure for persons proceeded against in each year includes persons proceeded against for offences committed in previous years.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to increase patrolling and surveillance in estates for which Newtownabbey RUC station is responsible in east Antrim.

Mr. Mates: This is an operational matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC, but I understand that police patrols have recently been increased in the Newtownabbey sub-division area.

Housing Executive

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings are owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in *(a)* each housing executive district, *(b)* each council area and *(c)* each housing executive region.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that at 1 March 1993, the number of dwellings owned by the housing executive in each housing executive district, region and council area was as follows:

Northern Ireland housing executive
Housing stock as at 1 March 1993

District	*Gross stock*	*District council*	*Total*
Belfast 1	3,941		
Belfast 2	5,656		
Belfast 3	5,156		
Belfast 4	5,088	Belfast	37,324
Belfast 5	5,947		
Belfast 6	5,155		
Belfast 7	6,381		
Belfast Region			37,324
Bangor	4,111	North Down	4,111
Newtownards 1	3,963	Ards	5,995
Newtownards 2	2,032		
Castlereagh 1	3,719	Castlereagh	6,411
Castlereagh 2	2,692		
Lisburn 1	4,850		
Lisburn 2	2,630	Lisburn	10,708
Lisburn 3	3,228		
Downpatrick	4,451	Down	4,451
South East Region			31,676
Banbridge	3,082	Banbridge	3,082
Newry 1	3,246	Newry and Mourne	7,043
Newry 2	3,797		
Armagh	3,914	Armagh	3,914
Brownlow	2,035		
Lurgan	2,978	Craigavon	7,836
Portadown	2,823		
South Region			21,875
Ballymena	5,421	Ballymena	5,421
Antrim	5,017	Antrim	5,017
Newtownabbey 1	3,986	Newtownabbey	7,669
Newtownabbey 2	3,683		
Carrickfergus	3,527	Carrickfergus	3,527
Larne	2,626	Larne	2,626
Ballycastle	1,519	Moyle	1,519
Ballymoney	2,776	Ballymoney	2,776
Coleraine	5,481	Coleraine	5,481
North East Region			34,036
Londonderry 1	4,219		
Londonderry 2	4,266	Derry	12,378
Londonderry 3	3,893		
Limavady	2,820	Limavady	2,820
Magherafelt	2,658	Magherafelt	2,658
Strabane	3,998	Strabane	3,998
Omagh	3,410	Omagh	3,410
Cookstown	2,105	Cookstown	2,105
Dungannon	3,426	Dungannon	3,426
Fermanagh	3,943	Fermanagh	3,943
West Region			34,738
Northern Ireland Total			159,649

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the costs of closing the Housing Executive's direct labour organisation this year and the total number of jobs which would be lost by district.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland housing executive, but I understand from the chief executive that the net cost of closing the direct labour organisation after taking account of anticipated receipts from the realisation of assets and the disposal of depots is £2·2 million. The number of job losses, by depot, based on employees, permanent and temporary, in post at the end of January 1993 is:

	Number
Central unit	22
Belfast	250
Craigavon	54
Ballyclare	164
Coleraine	52
Derry	90
Omagh	102
Support services	15

The Housing Executive hopes that some of the salaried staff included in the above can be redeployed. It should also be noted that the Housing Executive had intended to scale down the DLO labour force from around 750 at present to about 250 to 300 by the end of 1993-94.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by district the total number of Housing Executive contract modules per category for which the executive's DLO tendered, the number of contracts which the DLO actually won and the number in which it came second.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chief executive that the information, by Housing Executive region, is as follows:

	COT			Electrical			Building			Plumbing			Grounds Maintenance		
	A	C	B	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Belfast	17	3	2	20	1	2	20	7	3	20	3	4	7	[1]4	1
South East	6	2	1	18	0	1	21	4	5	19	3	0	6	[1]4	0
South	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	6	0	1
North East	9	0	2	30	2	3	30	5	1	30	2	3	9	5	0
West	8	1	2	18	0	3	26	3	4	26	3	10	8	[1]6	1
Total	41	6	7	87	3	9	98	20	13	96	12	17	36	19	3

[1] The Housing Executive has questioned the viability of a number of these tenders.

Notes:
COT = Cchange of Tenancy.
A = Number of modules competed for.
B = Number of modules won by DLO.
C = Number of modules in which DLO came second.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement giving details of the criteria for commercial viability applied by the Housing Executive to its DLO; and what consultation took place with the DOE regarding the establishment, interpretation and implementation of these criteria.

Mr. Atkins: The criteria were that all work undertaken from April 1993 had to be won following competition with the private sector and that from the same date no deficit financing would be available to cover trading losses. This followed discussion between the Department and the Housing Executive in the light of trading losses of some £4·5 million in 1991-92 and a projected loss of £3 million in 1992-93. There was regular discussion between the Housing Executive and the Department on the interpretation and implementation of these criteria.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total value of contracts won be each DLO district of the Housing Executive for the next year and the projected profits or losses.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chief executive that the information is as follows:

A. Building maintenance

Depot	Valuations of contracts won	Trading account projections for 1993-94	
	£	£	
Belfast	1,561,942	[1]155,000	Loss
Ballyclare	308,713	[2]—	
Coleraine	445,777	35,000	Loss
Pennyburn	168,388	[2]—	
Omagh	294,896	[2]—	

[1] This figure relates to combining Belfast and Ballyclare into a single operation.

[2] The tenders won by these depots represented such a small fraction of the turnover required to support the existing Depot structures that the Housing Executive considered it impossible to conduct meaningful projected trading accounts with prospects of future viability.

B. Grounds maintenance

Depot	Valuations of contracts won	Projected profit-loss 1993-94 before application of overheads and running costs	
	£	£	
Belfast	473,994	41,000	Loss
Ballyclare	306,671	35,000	Profit
Coleraine	142,695	17,000	Profit
Pennyburn	498,500	1,000	Loss
Omagh	110,920	14,000	Loss

Note:
An attempt to aggregate the Ballyclare and Coleraine operations with the most viable tenders won by other depots into a single operational unit (to reduce overheads and running costs to a minimum) produced a projected trading account net loss of £54,000.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what profits were made by each section of the Housing Executive's DLO over the past year.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chief executive that provisional accounts for the 11 months to 28 February 1993 are as follows:

Depot	Building maintenance (£)	Grounds maintenance (£)	Total (£)
Belfast	(571,000)	(235,000)	(806,000)
Carn	(816,000)	(75,000)	(891,000)
Ballyclare	(224,000)	39,000	(185,000)
Coleraine	45,000	5,000	50,000
Pennyburn	(147,000)	36,000	(111,000)
Omagh	(713,000)	(75,000)	(788,000)
Total loss	(2,426,000)	(305,000)	(2,731,000)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate a loss.

The Carn depot building maintenance operation was terminated at the end of October 1992. The estimated total DLO trading loss for the full year to 31 March 1993 is presently estimated at £3 million.

Employees (Religious Affiliation)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of Northern Ireland Railways.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the company. I am advised by the managing director that the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of Northern Ireland Railways Company Ltd. is not identified separately but is built into clerical and management labour costs within the human resources department and into general administration costs.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of *(a)* Ulsterbus Ltd., *(b)* Citybus Ltd. and *(c)* Flexibus.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the companies. I am advised by the managing director that the annual cost of monitoring religious affiliation is not readily available since it is not separately quantified but forms part of the overall cost of personnel administration.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The approximate cost in 1991-92 was £250.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

Mr. Atkins: The annual cost is negligible.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of *(a)* Belfast international airport and *(b)* Belfast city airport.

Mr. Atkins: The annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees at Belfast international airport and Belfast city airport is estimated to be £3,500 and £20,000 respectively.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Queen's university, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: The annual cost is estimated to be some £42,000.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the company. I am advised by the chief executive that the annual cost of monitoring religious affiliation of the employees of the NITHC is not identified separately but absorbed within normal administration costs.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the most comprehensive list of terrorist-related incidents kept by his Department; and where it can be inspected.

Mr. Mates: Official records of terrorist-related incidents contain sensitive information and it is not therefore appropriate to make them available for public inspection. However, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Kingston-Upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 3 December 1992 at column *308*. A comprehensive list of persons who have been killed as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland, Great Britain, Republic of Ireland and mainland Europe, including the name, date of death, and a brief report of the incident, is currently being compiled and will be placed in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed by *(a)* the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, *(b)* the university of Ulster and *(c)* Queen's university, Belfast.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 61 people are employed at the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, 3,018 at the university of Ulster and 2,819 at the Queen's university of Belfast.

Ulster Museum

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the attendance figures for 1992 for the Ulster museum and its outstations, with the percentage increase or decrease on the 1991 figures.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on 19 January 1993, *Official Report*, columns 174-75.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Mates: The potential scope of the initiative will vary between Departments. The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments are examining the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December and the further published guidance on contract energy management—17 February 1993—and joint ventures—16 March 1993.

Valuation and Lands Agency

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in establishing the Valuation and Lands Agency.

Mr. Mates: I am pleased to announce that the Valuation and Lands Agency has been established as an executive agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel for Northern Ireland with effect from today. It will be responsible for the provision of a good quality, cost-effective valuation and estate management service and fair, prompt and helpful service to clients, taxpayers and ratepayers. The following targets have been set for the agency:

(1) Rating—to complete 42,000 continuous revision cases and 700 appeals to the Commissioner of Valuation, equivalent to a case weighted output of 25,500 units;

Other—to complete 23,750 cases for other Government Departments and public bodies, equivalent to a case weighted output of 31,800 units;
(2) To achieve an increase in valuer productivity and all staff productivity of 3·8 per cent. and 2·5 per cent. respectively;
(3) To achieve a reduction of 3 per cent. in the real value of unit cost of casework;
(4) Where continuous revision cases are subject to retrospective backdating, to issue 75 per cent. of certificates within six months and 92 per cent. within 12 months of the event giving rise to the revision of the valuation list.
(5) To increase by 3 per cent. the percentage of selected representative cases completed within agreed time targets.
(6) To complete 85 per cent. of appeals where the assessment of NAV decided by the Commissioner of Valuation falls within established valuation tolerances of the initial assessment.

The valuation and Lands Agency has also to achieve running costs cash efficiency savings of at least 2·5 per cent.

I am confident that the new status as a next steps agency will lead to a significant and sustained improvement in the delivery of this important public service. I am delegating full managerial authority for the agency's day-to-day operations to the chief executive. The policy and resources framework for the agency is set out in the framework document, copies of which are being placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Defence Diversification

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what resources he expects to be released from the EC PERIFRA II programme in inward investment to support diversification from defence industry manufacture.

Mr. Needham: A total of 8·128 mecu of grant under the EC scheme PERIFRA II has been awarded to eight United Kingdom projects. Five of the eight, attracting grant of 5·729 mecu, are defence diversification projects. No further projects will be considered by the Commission under this scheme.

Direct Selling

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are employed in the direct selling industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: I regret that this information is not available.

Energy Advisory Panel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to establish his new energy advisory panel mentioned in Cm. 2235, paragraph 3.32, how many experts he plans to be members of the energy advisory panel; how the selection of panel members will be made; what additional resources he will make available to support the energy advisory panel's work; whether the energy advisory panel will meet annually; and whether information submitted to or obtained by the energy advisory panel will be treated in commercial confidence.

Mr. Eggar: I shall announce further details about the energy advisory panel in due course.

Annual Energy Report

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade at what time of year he intends to publish the annual energy report announced at paragraph 3.31 of his report, "The Prospects for Coal", Cm. 2235.

Mr. Eggar: An announcement about the timing of the annual energy report will be made in due course.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is considering, in consultation with the Treasury, how the private finance initiative can be applied to projects for which his Department is responsible.

Non-fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to review the 1998 data for ending the non-fossil fuel levy and obligation; what consultations he has had with the Energy and Competition Commissioners of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in discussion with the European Commission concerning the 1998 limitation on the non-fossil fuel obligation in relation to renewables.

Aerospace Companies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the amount of launch aid made available to British aerospace companies for each year since 1986.

Mr. Heseltine: Launch aid payments to British aerospace companies for each year since 1986 are as follows:

Year	*£ millions*
1986-87	119·0
1987-88	51·9
1988-89	98·4
1989-90	133·6
1990-91	141·1
1991-92	78·7
1992-93	31·3

Firework-related Injuries

Mr. Moss: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many firework-related injuries were referred to hospitals in 1992.

Mr. Leigh: According to reports from accident and emergency units in hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland, 942 people required treatment for injuries caused by fireworks, an increase of 13·25 per cent. over the annual average of 830 injuries since the end of 1987. A breakdown of the figures for 1992 and for the previous

four years by region, type of injury and kind of firework involved is being placed today in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. My Department will be discussing with the industry what further steps are to be taken to encourage safer use of fireworks in the future.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Hayes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about his plans for the future of the Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Eggar: In its report on the Atomic Energy Authority published last May, Cm 1947, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommended a further review of strategic options for the Atomic Energy Authority, including that of removing the Atomic Energy Authority's business activities from the public sector where practicable. As a first step, I am commissioning independent consultants to consider the practicability of privatisation and to advise on the main options. I shall decide how best to proceed in the light of the report and the Atomic Energy Authority's own views.

Ministerial Travel Costs

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost to his Department of each trip abroad on coal and energy-related matters undertaken by himself and the Minister for Energy; and what contributions to the costs were made by other organisations.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

Destination	*Total cost* £
President	
Russia and Azerbaijan[1]	11,600
President and Mr. Eggar	
Belgium	2,200
Mr. Eggar	
United States of America (twice)	13,200
Belgium (twice)	900
Portugal	1,000
Norway (four times)	6,300
Austria	1,000
Germany	1,200
Japan/China	10,100
France	600

[1] Energy related matters formed only part of the purpose of this trip.

No contributions to the costs of these visits were received from other organisations.

Opencast Coal Mining

Mr. Dover: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment he has made of the level of private sector investment in the supply of British coal from opencast sites; and how many people are employed in this sector;

(2) how many jobs of private sector employees engaged in opencast coal production would be lost if British Coal opencast coal production was cut by *(a)* one quarter, *(b)* one third or *(c)* one half.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* British Coal has advised me that private sector companies have invested over £1 billion in plant and other assets engaged in opencast mining in the United Kingdom. Some 10,000 people are directly employed in opencast operations. Employment levels could be expected to change broadly in line with changes in output.

Mr. Dover: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the assessed reserves of opencast coal in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 March 1993]:* British Coal advises me that proved reserves of opencast coal in Great Britain are in excess of 300 million tonnes, and there are further substantial unproved reserves. There are no figures available for lignite reserves in Northern Ireland.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many chemicals and families of chemicals could potentially be used as chemical weapons.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 31 March 1993]:* Any toxic chemical could potentially be used as a chemical weapon.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *484*, what was the cost to public funds, in cash terms and at 1993 prices, of the offers for regional selective assistance in the Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye travel-to-work area in each year since 1984.

Mr. Needham: The totals of payments made in cash terms and at 1993 prices under the offers of RSA made in the Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye travel-to-work area for the years 1984 to 1993, to dates are as follows:

Year	*Cash Terms £000*	*1993 Prices £000*
1984	0	0
1985	1,086	712
1986	947	641
1987	196	140
1988	350	268
1989	1,854	1,513
1990	630	554
1991	113	106
1992	242	236
[1]1993	0	0
Total	5,418	4,170

[1] To date

WALES

Employment Projects, North Wales

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the projects under way in north Wales designed to improve employment prospects, and the number of people they are helping.

Mr. David Hunt: As well as a substantial number of capital projects in north Wales, my Department has

recorded nearly 100 industrial projects in the counties of Gwynedd and Clwyd since 1 January 1992 which, in total, promise to create or safeguard in excess of 5,200 jobs. These figures are based on information provided by companies at the time projects were recorded and have not been amended to take account of subsequent developments. The following is a list of the companies concerned, excluding those that have requested confidentiality.

Projects recorded

Pilkington Micronics Ltd.
Pilkington PE Ltd.
Rowan Foods Ltd.
W & J Tod Ltd.
Westley Paper Co.
Rongar Ltd.
Abercroft Cakes Ltd.
Accumatic Filtration Ltd.
British Aerospace Corporate Jets Ltd.
Cambria Oil Ltd.
Hazelwood Frozen Foods Ltd.
Brookfield Foods Ltd.
Comp-Plus Ltd.
Fisher Seafoods Ltd.
Griflex Creators Ltd.
Perfaroll
Wells Kelo Ltd.
Ynys Môn Personal Development Ltd.
Mackintosh Reynolds
Leapfrog
Amazon Gas Ltd.
Boss Smithsons
Bradite Paints Ltd.
Industrial Cleaning Papers Ltd.
Pearl Assurance Plc
Air Atlantic Express Ltd.
Casco Nobel Ltd.
Core Drill (UK) Ltd.
Gold Crest Foods Ltd.
Kaun
Amcor Packaging (Europe) Ltd.
Barry UK Ltd.
Delta Dailyfoods (UK) Ltd.
PWA Waldhof UK Ltd.
Golden Food Products Ltd.
Peboc Ltd.
The Bradford Soap Works Ltd.
HJ Heinz/Sous Chef Ltd.
NK International Ltd.
Pacplas Ltd.
Communication Systems Inc.
Cambrian Lifting Equipment Ltd.
Cigmon Meats Ltd.
Denis Ferranti Meters Ltd.
Henrob Ltd.
Honeycrown Ltd.
Patina Press Ltd.
Phillips Plastics Corporation Ltd.
South Caernarfon Creameries Ltd.
Marshall Food Group Ltd.
Anchor Computing Systems Ltd.
Davro (Chester) Ltd.
Contact Cables Ltd.
Allen Industrial Ltd.
P & R Graphics Ltd.
North Wales Agricultural Engineers
Seastream Products Ltd.
Velmore Fashions Ltd.
Lovell Johns Ltd.
Country Style Foods
Hamilton Oil & Co. Ltd.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines on special circumstances have been issued to Welsh Water in respect of the disconnection of customers for delinquent payments.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Director General of Water Services issued guidelines to water companies last year on a consistent and fair approach towards customers with unpaid charges. This followed a review of companies policy and practice. He is now considering reports from the regional customer services committees on the effectiveness of the guidelines and will be considering what further action may be necessary.

Class Sizes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what was the average class size of *(a)* primary schools, *(b)* secondary schools, *(c)* sixth form colleges, *(d)* colleges of further education, *(e)* colleges of higher education and *(f)* infant schools in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt *[pursuant to his reply, 17 February 1993, c. 273]:* The methodology applied to the 1990-91 data was inconsistent with other years. The figures for primary schools has now been revised as shown in the table. The average class size in primary and secondary schools and further and higher education courses in Wales since 1979 is shown in the following table. Figures are not available for further and higher education courses prior to 1982-83 and for secondary schools prior to 1986-87. Information on the average class size of infant schools and sixth form colleges is not collected separately. Information for the colleges of the university of Wales is not available.

	Primary	*Secondary*[1]	*Further education*[2]	*Higher education*[2]
1979-80	24·3	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	23·9	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	24·1	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	23·9	n/a	13·5	12·5
1983-84	23·7	n/a	13·5	13·2
1984-85	24·1	n/a	14·0	13·7
1985-86	24·3	n/a	13·3	13·4
1986-87	24·4	19·4	13·2	14·2
1987-88	24·5	19·1	13·5	14·1
1988-89	24·8	19·0	[3]14·0	[3]13·5
1989-90	24·8	18·9	14·0	13·9
1990-91	25·2	19·2	14·3	15·7
1991-92	25·4	21·5	n/a	n/a

[1] Prior to 1986-87 information on the size of classes in secondary schools was collected on a different basis. These data, relating to the numbers of classes by size, are given in the Secondary Education section of "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

[2] Average class sizes for Wales are calculated on a further education or higher education basis and the figures do include a small number of further education courses run at higher education establishments and higher education courses at further education establishments.

[3] Changes in methodology introduced in 1988-89 may affect comparisons of indicators between 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of unemployed *(a)* men and *(b)* women in south Wales; and if he will give for each sex the percentage unemployment rate.

Mr. David Hunt: In February 1993 there were 70,178 male and 17,295 female unemployed claimants in south Wales—defined as the counties of Gwent and Mid, South and West Glamorgan—representing 15·5 and 5 per cent. of the male and female work force respectively.

M4 (Sign Board)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will re-locate the sign board on the M4 westbound carriageway welcoming motorists to Wales to its correct geographical position.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I do not intend to relocate the existing "Welcome to Wales" sign, which is not intended to mark the border. The border itself is the centre of the River Wye. The sign is currently situated half a mile from the border and as close to the border as highway safety considerations will allow.

Dredging

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library all the information he has received to date in relation to the monitoring processes required under the licence conditions imposed on the Llanelli Sand Dredging Company for dredging on the Helwick bank.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No material required under the Government view has yet been received. Once it has, and my right hon. Friend is satisfied that it meets the conditions attached to the licence, I will make copies available in the Library of the House. Copies will also be sent to interested parties.

Llantarnam Abbey

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement about the future of Llantarnam abbey.

(2) what representations he has received regarding the future of Llantarnam abbey; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Llantarnam abbey is a grade II listed building and proposals affecting its future will be considered against published planning guidance. Representations were made to the Department concerning the impact on the abbey of our proposals for the A4042 Llantarnam bypass. These were considered at a public inquiry held in February/March 1992 and orders for the bypass were published in December 1992.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to establish a second cardiac surgery unit in south Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend will announce his proposals for the further development of cardiac services when he has had an opportunity to consider the conclusions of the Touche Ross options appraisal report.

Consultants

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each health authority in Wales a list of reports commissioned from management consultants in each of the last three years to date specifying *(a)* the date on which the work was commissioned, *(b)* the name of the management consultants and *(c)* the subject area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Nurses (Grading)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals are still outstanding under the scheme for the regrading of nurses in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of clinical grading appeals currently outstanding in Wales are as follows:

	Number
At employing authority level	120
At regional level (Welsh Appeals Committee)	1,285
At national level (Negotiating Council)	223

British Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives have been taken by the British Council to raise the profile of Wales abroad.

Mr. David Hunt: The British Council in Wales aims to promote an overseas awareness of the distinctive culture, resources and achievements of Wales. It co-ordinates educational missions and exhibitions overseas, for example in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Germany, to enhance an understanding of contemporary Wales and to publicise the quality of Welsh further and higher education and Welsh achievements in science and research. In May 1993, it is arranging in collaboration with British Council offices overseas and commercial sponsors—an art event "Wales Week at Stuttgart".

There are a number of other activities which the British Council undertakes which enable overseas specialists to visit Wales, and also to enable Welsh specialists to go to other countries to organise specialist courses.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now take steps to ensure that radiotherapy treatment for cancer patients can be made available at Ysbyty Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend is currently considering an investment appraisal report on how best to establish a dedicated cancer treatment centre with radiotherapy facilities in north Wales. A separate economic appraisal of a recent proposal by the Clatterbridge centre for oncology for a networked radiotherapy treatment service is also being considered. My right hon. Friend hopes to be in a position to make an announcement soon.

Continuing Care Beds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for the numbers of continuing care beds in each health authority in Wales; and what the corresponding figures were five years earlier.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not available centrally.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress his Department has made in meeting its targets for settling hill livestock compensatory allowance claims in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The target was to pay, by the end of March, 80 per cent. of claims received. I am pleased to report that 86 per cent. of claims received had been met.

Urban Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications for Wales of the reduction in the resources committed for the 1993-94 programme.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Excluding special commitments for the national garden festival and the community revival strategy in 1992-93, Wales will benefit from a slightly higher urban programme settlement in 1993-94 than in the previous year.

Mental Handicap

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost to public funds of mentally handicapped patients in small group homes in Wales, including their DHS benefit; and what is the corresponding figure for long-stay accommodation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The cost of providing a home and support in the community varies widely according to individual need. It can be slightly greater than providing support in long-stay institutions. The additional cost is spent to ensure a better quality of life in the community.

Health Checks

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of patients reaching the age of 65 years are receiving an automatic health check under his new general practitioner contract in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally. As from today, patients will be able to require a three-year health check, as prescribed in general practitioners' terms of service and in line with the patients charter.

Community Care

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance his Department has given to the Welsh Consumers Council to evaluate the requirements of consumers of community care services in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office has not given assistance to the Welsh Consumer Council for this purpose. It is a function of local councils to assess the needs of their local populations for community services in preparing their social care plans. Resources have been made available to the Welsh Consumer Council to manage a scheme to set up panels of users and carers across Wales to evaluate the published information about social and community care which is produced by the statutory authorities.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to distribute in Wales his Department's brochure, "Community Care Changes in April 1993"; how many copies of the brochure have been printed; and what has been the cost to date .

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A total of 80,000 bilingual copies of the leaflet, "Community Care in April 1993", have been produced, at a cost of £13,550. They have been distributed to main post offices and Benefits Agency offices throughout Wales.

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate has been made of the total revenue cost to public funds in respect of the 20-year old male mentally ill patient designated in the very challenging behaviour class who recently left the Llanfrechfa Grange hospital, Newport, into community care; what was the amount of special grant given to the Welsh Office; and what are the capital costs for this patient.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information relating to specific individuals is not kept centrally. The costs of support in both long stay institutions and in the community are based on individual needs.

Funds are available from the mental handicap strategy for the revenue costs to support individuals with a mental handicap in the community. While they may be slightly greater than comparable costs of hospital care, the additional cost is well spent to ensure improvements in the quality of life for the individuals concerned.

No central information is available on capital costs of individual schemes funded by housing associations or private mortgages. The mental handicap strategy does not normally supply capital monies for the purchase of houses.

Schools (Fires)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many schools have been damaged or destroyed by arson since 1980 in each local education authority area;

(2) what has been the estimated financial cost of the damage to schools by fire, by accident or deliberate means, since 1980.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Schools (Vandalism)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what initiatives he is taking to lessen vandalism in and about Wales;

(2) what policies he has to lessen damage to schools by arson; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Building bulletins relating to crime prevention and fire safety in schools have been issued to local education authorities. These provide practical guidance to help combat vandalism and arson.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to assist rough sleepers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys carried out a census of people sleeping rough in England and Wales on the night of 21 to 22 April 1991 and found 29 rough sleepers in the Principality.

Local councils wishing to test innovative approaches in the exercise of their responsibilities for dealing with such cases may apply under the homelessness reserve, which has been maintained for 1993-94.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take account of the results of the referendums to be held in the Llangollen area on the proposals for local government reform when drawing up the legislation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and I will be interested to see the results when they are available.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the table:

	Pupil teacher ratio within schools
(a) maintained primary schools	22·3
(b) maintained secondary schools	15·6

Note: As at January 1992.

Social Rented Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what support his Department gives to research into fire protection in social rented houses in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A grant of £27,000 has been awarded to the Cardiff institute of higher education under the Welsh Office's housing options Wales small grants scheme which is enabling a fire risk and safety assessment project to be undertaken.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account has been taken of the guidance given in the World Health Organisation European Series Number 46 publication on Site Selection for New Hazardous Waste Management Facilities (1993) in making decisions to grant planning permission for waste incineration facilities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No planning applications for waste incineration facilities have been considered by my right hon. Friend in 1993. Information on decisions taken by local planning authorities is not held centrally.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. David Hunt: I consult the Prime Minister as necessary in accordance with the guidance in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is examining the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested in the interim guidance published by the Treasury. In a number of areas, the Welsh Office and its sponsored bodies are actively engaged in joint ventures with the private sector. I expect the new guidelines to help expand this practice into new fields. A number of such projects are already under consideration.

Schools (Capital Spending)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of capital spending on schools for each of the local education authorities for each of the last five years in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available is given in the table.

Gross capital expenditure on schools[1]

£000

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Cash prices					
Clwyd	6,664	5,959	6,246	6,024	8,208
Dyfed	5,365	5,315	3,337	4,637	6,032
Gwent	5,888	6,896	7,045	8,890	6,124
Gwynedd	2,238	2,299	2,075	2,520	2,763
Mid Glamorgan	6,255	6,260	6,766	7,322	6,174
Powys	2,452	1,699	1,854	1,212	2,046
South Glamorgan	1,920	3,980	6,427	6,307	7,056
West Glamorgan	5,059	5,160	6,106	6,204	4,616
Total Counties	35,841	37,568	39,856	43,116	43,019
1991-92 price					
Clwyd	8,778	7,316	7,196	6,425	8,208
Dyfed	7,067	6,526	3,844	4,946	6,032
Gwent	7,756	8,467	8,116	9,482	6,124
Gwynedd	2,948	2,823	2,390	2,688	2,763
Mid Glamorgan	8,239	7,686	7,795	7,810	6,174
Powys	3,230	2,086	2,136	1,293	2,046

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
South Glamorgan	2,529	4,887	7,404	6,727	7,056
West Glamorgan	6,664	6,335	7,034	6,617	4,616
Total Counties	47,209	46,125	45,916	45,989	43,019

[1] Includes nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.

Quinquennial Reviews

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to commence the quinquennial reviews of *(a)* the national library of Wales, *(b)* the national museum of Wales, *(c)* the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *(d)* the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, *(e)* Housing for Wales and *(f)* the Curriculum Council for Wales; what proposals he has for meeting his staffing requirements for release for undertaking these quinquennial reviews; what proposals he has to set up a section of his Department to undertake reviews; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Financial management and policy reviews are planned to begin during 1993-94 for all these bodies, with the exception of the Curriculum Council for Wales, because, subject to the passage of the Education Bill, it will be replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales on 1 April 1994.

Reviews are normally carried out by staff temporarily transferred from other duties; I have no proposals for setting up a special section.

Housing Survey

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the Welsh Office housing survey to be completed and published; what data he has collected in that survey in relation to numbers speaking or understanding Welsh; which company won the contract to carry out the survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh house condition survey is being undertaken in two stages. Two separate contracts have been placed after competitive tendering.

The first stage was a social survey which incorporated questions on housing, training and education, and the Welsh language. A copy of the questionnaire used to collect data about understanding of the language will be placed in the Library of the House. The contract for this survey was won by Research and Marketing Ltd. Survey fieldwork was completed at the end of 1992 and processing of responses is continuing. Results for the various topics covered will be published separately later this year.

The second stage will be a physical survey. The fieldwork will be undertaken in the next few months and results will be published by early 1994. The contract for this survey has been won by Bailey Widnell.

Llwynmawr Site, Swansea

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date his deferment of his planning directive relating to the Llwynmawr site in Swansea expires.

Mr. David Hunt: In view of the strength of local feeling expressed to me by parents and their representatives in the Sketty and Ty Coch areas, I am today consulting the West Glamorgan county council about revocation of the direction to sell the land at Llwynmawr road, Swansea.

Health Promotion

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent efficiency scrutiny of health promotion in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The scrutiny team made 37 recommendations aimed at improving the value for money obtained from the resources invested in health promotion in Wales. In particular, the team considered that local responsibility and accountability for health promotion should be strengthened, but with improved links between local and national planning, and that the disciplines of commissioner/provider arrangements should be extended in the field of health promotion.

The Department has accepted almost all of the recommendations, and has already set action in hand with a view to implementing the great majority of them by the beginning of financial year 1994-95.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the efficiency scrutiny report and the Department's response.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Miss Widdecombe: The information has been placed in the Library under the heading "DSS Management and Information Technology Consultancy Contracts 1988-89/ 1992-93".

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for 1993-94 the number of pensioners *(a)* in receipt of income-related benefits, *(b)* entitled to receive but not claiming income-related benefits and *(c)* with income £10 per week or less above the eligibility level for receipt of income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables. The latest available figures on the take up of income-related benefits can be found in "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take Up in 1989" published on 11 January 1993, copies of which are in the Library. It is not possible to provide information regarding take-up of benefit in 1993-94 as DSS does not produce such forecasts.

Table 1: Estimated number of pensioners in receipt of income-related benefits 1993-94

(1) Benefit	(2) Number of Pensioners (Millions)
Income Support	1·6
Housing Benefit	2·3
Council Tax Benefit	3·1
Family Credit	[2]
Disability Working Allowance	[1]

Table 2: Numbers of pensioners, for each income-related benefit, whose weekly income taken into account when calculating benefit levels is in a £10 range starting at the level which would reduce benefit entitlement to zero

(1) Benefit	(2) Number of Pensioners (Millions)
Income Support	0·8
Housing Benefit	0·1
Council Tax Benefit	0·3
Family Credit	[2]
Disability Working Allowance	[1]

[1] Denotes information is not available.
[2] Denotes less than 5,000 people.

Notes:
1. Modelled at 1993-94 incomes, price and benefit levels, using data drawn from the 1988-89-90 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. Some people may be included in calculations for more than one benefit.
3. Table includes pensioners whose partner is under the age of 60.
4. All figures rounded to nearest 100,000

Mr. Dewar To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for 1993-94 the number of *(a)* claimants and dependants in receipt of income-related benefits, *(b)* people and their dependants who are eligible for, but not claiming, income-related benefits or *(c)* people and dependants with incomes £10 a week or less above the eligibility limits for income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables. The latest available figures on the take up of income-related benefits can be found in "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take Up in 1989" published on 11 January 1993, copies of which are in the Library. It is not possible to provide information regarding take-up of benefit in 1993-94 as DSS does not produce such forecasts.

Table 1: Estimated numbers of people and their dependants in receipt of income-related benefits 1993-94

(1) Benefit	(2) Number of people (Millions)	(3) Number of dependants (Millions)
Income Support	5·7	4·6
Housing Benefit	4·6	3·7
Council Tax Benefit	5·0	3·4
Family Credit	0·4	1·2
Disability Working Allownce	[1]	[1]

Table 2: Numbers of people and their dependants, for each income-related benefit, whose weekly income taken into account when calculating benefit levels is in a £10 range starting at the level which would reduce benefit entitlement to zero

(1) Benefit	(2) Number of people (Millions)	(3) Number of dependants (Millions)
Income Support	1·6	0·6
Housing Benefit	0·2	0·2
Council Tax Benefit	0·4	0·4
Family Credit	0·1	0·1
Disability Working Allowance	[1]	[1]

[1] Denotes information is not available.
Notes:
1. Modelled at 1993-94 incomes, price and benefit levels, using data drawn from the 1988-89-90 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. Column (3) includes partners and dependant children.
3. Some people may be included in calculations for more than one benefit.
4. All figures rounded to the nearest 100,000.

21-hour Rule

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether participants on learning for work and the new community action programme who are unable to get jobs after they leave their scheme can immediately take advantage of the 21-hour rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: People who have completed the learning for work scheme or the community action programme have to satisfy the normal qualifying conditions before they can take advantage of the 21-hour rule concession. Those who receive an element of income support during their participation will be treated in the same way as other income support recipients. The three months in receipt of a qualifying benefit required under the 21-hour rule can therefore include time spent in either of these schemes.

Utilities Charges

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what allowance is made when calculating how much income support/pension is to be paid for the variations in charges between privatised utilities in different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Burt: None. Income support is a national scheme.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to reply to the letters to him dated 8 January, 21 January and 25 February, with regared to Mr. McNulty, 12 Osborne road, sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton.

Mr. Scott: The right hon. Member's letter of 8 January was passed to Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency to reply as it concerned an operational matter. I understand from Mr. Bichard that he replied on 19 January 1993. The letter of 21 January did not seek action or comment on the part of Ministers. I have no record of receipt of the letter of 25 February from the right hon. Member on this matter.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated

25 February from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, with regard to Mrs. A. Ali, 25 Hator road, about whom the right hon. Member originally wrote on 12 October 1992.

Mr. Scott: The administration of mobility allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the benefits agency. I understand that the right hon. Member has already received from the agency a reply both to his earlier letter and to his question. I regret the delay he has suffered.

Letter from Ann Robinson to Mr. Gerald Kaufman, dated 1 April 1993

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions on relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when he will reply to the letter to him dated 25 February asking about Mrs. A. Ali, 25 Hector Road, about whom the Right honourable Member originally wrote on 12 October 1992.

I am pleased to inform you that Mrs. Ali's claim to Mobility Allowance on behalf of her daughter Shabana has now been decided and due notification has been sent to her. I am sorry that there has been such a long delay in dealing with Mrs. Ali's claim and I offer my sincere apologies to her for the distress and inconvenience this must have caused. I have written to you separately and in greater detail about this matter.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Council Tax

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what help will be available to people on low incomes to pay their council tax bills from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The new council tax benefit scheme will replace the community charge benefit scheme from 1 April and is expected to help more than 5 million people to pay their council tax bills, at an estimated cost of around £1·6 billion. People on low incomes will be eligible to claim benefit whether they are in or out of work, sick or unemployed.

Unlike community charge benefit, there will be no minimum charge to pay under the council tax benefit scheme, so that people on income support or equivalent levels of income, will receive help with up to 100 per cent. of their tax bills. Smaller rebates, based on a sliding scale, will be available to people with incomes above income support levels.

Council tax benefit will also be available to certain people with higher incomes who would not normally qualify for income-related benefits where they share their home on a non-commercial basis with another person who is on a low income.

In addition, people on income-related benefits will gain from the Government's decision not to re-claim the amount included in these benefits for the 20 per cent. contribution under the community charge. This measure is worth £0·75 billion at 1993-94 prices.

This means that even after paying their local tax, around six million liable people on income-related benefits will be better off under the new council tax benefit scheme. Some people will be up to £2·80 a week better off.

The new benefit has already been publicised in local, regional and free newspapers during March, and will be followed up by further advertising during April and May at a cost of around £750,000. A comprehensive leaflet called "Council Tax Benefit—Help with the Council Tax" —CTB1—has already been produced and can be obtained from post offices, social security offices and council offices, or by returning the coupon or telephoning free the number shown in the press advertisement. The leaflet is also available in 12 other languages.

A detailed information pack, setting out the principles of the new scheme, has been sent to each Member of Parliament, and will be made available to other interested groups.

Source: Figures based on 1988-89-90 Family Expenditure Surveys uprated to 1993-94 prices and benefit levels and estimated council tax levels.

Disability (Grants) Bill

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he intends to fund the independent living (extension) fund, the independent living (1993) fund and motability while the Disability (Grants) Bill is passing through the legislative process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Disability (Grants) Bill currently before Parliament will allow the Secretary of State to make grants to certain named organisations that help disabled people lead a more independent life in the community. These organisations are the independent living (extension) fund, the independent living (1993) fund, and motability.

I am pleased to be able to announce the launch today of these new funds for independent living. The extension fund will continue to pay cash to everyone who is currently receiving money from the ILF, while the 1993 fund, in conjunction with local authorities will begin to accept new applications.

Parliamentary approval of expenditure on these new services will be sought in the 1993-94 main estimate for the housing benefit administration and council tax benefit administration, payments into the social fund in respect of discretionary expenditure, and other grants vote—class XIII, vote 3. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £42,400,000 will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Contrary to Government accounting conventions, expenditure on these new services was included in the 1993-94 main estimate for class XIII, vote 3 in advance of the necessary legislation achieving Second Reading. The provision in question, totalling £120,277,000 will not be used for this or any other purpose until the enabling legislation has come into force.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrangements for paying the new Treasury grant to the national insurance fund.

Miss Widdecombe: The Social Security Act 1993, which received Royal Assent in January 1993, gave powers for the payment of a Treasury grant to the national insurance fund to strengthen the fund's balance. Parliamentary approval for this new expenditure will be sought in the 1993-94 main estimate for the Department of Social

Security's housing benefit, council tax benefit, payments into the national insurance fund and payments into the social fund in respect of regulated expenditure vote—class XIII, vote 2—presented to the House on 9 March. Pending that approval, expenditure estimated at £1·5 billion will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund.

Fuel Costs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is taking to protect pensioners and those on low incomes from the effects of the imposition of value added tax upon domestic fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 March, at column *511*.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: Our next steps agencies are examining the scope for private finance in a number of areas, including joint ventures in information technology projects, setting up and running staff child care facilities, property development and redeveloping existing sites, and leasing computer hardware.

Pensioners

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners are estimated to have benefited from increases in the pensioner premium in income support since the introduction of the scheme.

Mr. Burt: The latest available data[1] indicated that there were 1,369,000 income support recipients aged over 60 receiving one of the pensioner premiums. There have been increases in some or all of the pensioner premiums, over and above the normal annual upratings, in October 1989, April 1991, April 1992 and October 1992.

Note:

[1] Source: May 1991 Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Percentage Disablement Award

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of percentage disablement award for the claims prior to 1992 which went to the medical appeal tribunal in the northern region.

Mr. Scott: Social security administration is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Mr. Bill Etherington, dated 31 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is the responsibility of Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what was the level of disablement award for the claims prior to 1992 which went to the Medical Appeal Tribunal in the Northern Region.

There may be some misunderstanding as to the way the appeals system operates. A customer can appeal against the decision of the adjudicating authorities irrespective of the level of the percentage disablement award. However, if you are relating your question to a specific subject I would be grateful if you would write to me with further details as to the information you require and I will be pleased to answer you with such information as is available.

I am sorry that I am unable to be of more assistance on this occasion. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mucous Membrane Disease

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for mucous membrane disease were made to his Department in the northern region in the two years prior to the take-up campaign of April 1992; and how many claims have been made since April 1992;

(2) what general guidance his Department has issued since 1992 to *(a)* regional chief medical officers, *(b)* adjudicating medical authorities and *(c)* medical appeal tribunals, as to what is considered the appropriate loss of faculty in considering cases of mucous membrane disease.

Mr. Scott: The administration of industrial injuries disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Mr. Bill Etherington, dated 31 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is the responsibility of Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking (i) how many claims for mucous membrane disease were made to his Department in the Northern Region in the two years prior to the take up campaign of April 1992; and how many claims have been made since April 1992 (ii) what general guidance his Department has issued since 1992 to *(a)* regional chief medical officers, *(b)* adjudicating medical authorities and *(c)* medical appeal tribunals, as to what is considered the appropriate loss of faculty in cases of mucous membrane disease.

Figures relating to the number of claims to mucous membrane disease(D4) prior to April 1992 are not available, as figures relating to individual prescribed diseases are not routinely kept, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, as a result of a special exercise undertaken by the Department following the take up campaign I am able to tell you that from June 1992 until the end of February this year 4,146 claims had been received for Prescribed Disease D4 in the Tyne Tees Area.

In answer to your second question; the Department issues "Notes on the Diagnosis of Prescribed Diseases", to the senior medical officers who organize the training of Adjudicating Medical Authorities. Copies of this guidance have been placed in the Library. These adjudicating authorities must make up their own minds on the evidence of particular cases. Medical Appeal Tribunals (MATs) operate independently of the Department as part of the Independent Tribunal Service and the Secretary of State does not issue guidance on such matters to MATs.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the implications of his policy of curtailing payment of residential allowance to claimants in care homes when the claimant is away from the care home for longer than six days.

Mr. Burt: We have recently received a number of representations from hon. Members and others on this issue and we are giving careful consideration to all the implications. We shall make an announcement shortly.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 2 April 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Crown Courts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of defendants appearing in a Crown court changed their plea from not guilty to guilty for each of the court circuits in England and Wales in each year since 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not collected.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of defendants pleaded guilty in the Crown court for each of the court circuits in England and Wales in each year since 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is set out in the table. The figures given are for those defendants who pleaded guilty to all counts. Data for 1992 are provisional and liable to revision to account for any late amendments.

Committals for trial: guilty pleas (per cent. of all[1] defendants)

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Midland and Oxford	82	83	79	77
North Eastern	86	86	84	83
Northern	80	80	78	77
South Eastern:				
London	50	50	48	50
Provinces	64	64	61	60
Wales and Chester	73	72	73	70
Western	72	74	72	74
ENGLAND AND WALES	72	72	70	70

[1] Excluding those defendants for whom bench warrants issued, no pleas recorded, indictment to lie on file, found unfit to plead and other results.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of defendants were found not guilty in Crown court cases for each of the court circuits in England and Wales in each year since 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table shows the percentage of defendants acquitted against the number of defendants who pleaded not guilty to all counts during each year since 1989. The 1992 figures are provisional and liable to revision to account for any late amendments.

Crown court trials: Per cent. of defendants who have pleaded not guilty to all counts acquitted

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Midland and Oxford	52	58	60	51
North Eastern	54	62	54	55
Northern	55	56	59	63
South Eastern:				
London	59	60	61	59
Provinces	55	55	57	56
Wales and Chester	53	51	47	50
Western	57	55	60	49
ENGLAND AND WALES	56	57	58	56

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average time a defendant had to wait between being charged with an offence and having his or her case heard in the Crown court for each of the court circuits in England and Wales in each year since 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Figures for waiting times from date of charge are not available. The table shows the average waiting time in weeks between the date of committal for trial and the start of hearing. Data for 1992 are provisional and liable to revision to account for any late amendments.

Waiting Times: Committals for Trial (Weeks)

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Midland and Oxford	9·04	8·30	9·21	12·66
North Eastern	12·06	12·64	13·55	15·86
Northern	11·76	12·09	11·05	12·04
South Eastern:				
London	15·98	15·49	15·91	16·40
Provinces	13·07	13·23	14·30	13·31
Wales and Chester	7·93	8·31	8·06	9·36
Western	13·04	12·73	13·71	16·30
ENGLAND AND WALES	12·44	12·07	12·58	13·95

Bradford Courts

Mr. Madden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will arrange for the Bradford combined court centre to be designated as a care centre for the hearing of care cases brought under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Bradford county court currently enjoys some Children Act jurisdiction as a family hearing centre. A national review of the designation of care centres has always been part of the Lord Chancellor's arrangements for the monitoring of the Children Act. This review will begin in the summer and will involve extensive consultation at local level. Consideration of any recommendations to my Department will take place during the autumn with a view to implementing any changes in the spring of 1994.

Magistrates

Mr. Allason: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates have resigned since the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and of these how many have given as their reason for resigning concern about the effect of that Act.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of resignations during 1992, other than on grounds of age, for the Lord Chancellor's area of responsibility was 1,034. No information is collected centrally on how many magistrates gave concern about the effects of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 as a reason for resignation.

Northern Ireland Court Service

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Northern Ireland court service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The equal opportunities unit of the Northern Ireland court service is responsible for the full range of equal opportunities issues within the service which includes monitoring by religious affiliation, gender and disability. It is not possible to separate the cost of monitoring by religious affiliation. The annual staff costs for the unit are £21,378·03.

EMPLOYMENT

London East TEC

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been given in grants from her Department to the London East training and enterprise council in each year since 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: This Department has funded London East Training and Enterprise Council since 1 April 1991.

Details of funding for each financial year since then are:

Financial year	*£ million*
1991-92	26.415
1992-93	32.958

Funding is split into five blocks and allocated to specific areas. The blocks are youth training and education, adult training, enterprise, local initiative fund and management fee.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how expenditure by training and enterprise councils is monitored.

Mr. McLoughlin: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) are paid sums specified in their business plan and claimed in accordance with the provisions of the TEC operating agreement. This is renewed annually and signed on behalf of my right hon. Friend by the Department's regional directors. A copy of the operating agreement is in the Library.

Invoices submitted by TECs are subject to regular appraisal and monitoring by finance control staff in ED regional offices. Departmental procedures are designed to ensure that public and parliamentary accountability is maintained.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the names of all members of the board of the London East training and enterprise council since its establishment and their period of office.

Mr. McLoughlin: Details of board membership are available from London East training and enterprise council's corporate plans or direct from the acting chief executive, Steve Crow.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been given in grants by her Department to the London East training and enterprise council for business education partnerships and to which organisations, and for what amounts, in each year since 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: This Department has funded London East training and enterprise council since 1 April 1991.

Details of funding for each financial year since then are:

Education business partnerships payments to TECs

Financial year	*£ million*
1991-92	0·075,300
1992-93	0·046,175

Information on who the TEC contracts with and how much it pays them is commercial in confidence between the TEC and the organisations concerned.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by the London East training and enterprise council; and how many staff have left in the last year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Direct employment of staff by training and enterprise councils is entirely a matter for the TECs themselves. The hon. Gentleman may wish to contact the acting chief executive of London East TEC, Steve Crow.

Business-Education Partnerships

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what arrangements are made in those boroughs and local authorities which do not have a business-education partnership for finance to be made available from training and enterprise councils for the work which would be carried out by such a business-education partnership;

(2) how many local authorities have business-education partnerships.

Mr. McLoughlin: Education business partnerships are operating in all training and enterprise council and local education authority areas.

Unemployment Benefit Disqualifications

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when and where the figures for unemployment benefit disqualifications for the quarter to December 1992 will be published.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. J. Turner to Ms Angela Eagle, dated 2 April 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer parliamentary questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State about the publication of statistics relating to unemployment benefit disqualifications for the quarter ending 31 December 1992.

The Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions for the quarter ending 31 December 1992 has now been published and copies were sent to the Library of the House on 29 March.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Forensic Investigations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will instruct all police authorities to use forensic archaeologists at excavation sites where a body or bodies are believed to have been buried; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will ensure that all police authorities use physical anthropologists at crime scene investigations as soon as they commence; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the police authorities who currently use forensic anthropologists in their investigations; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will list by police authority those who use archaeologists for their forensic investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The use of forensic archaeologists, forensic anthropologists and other specialists to assist with the investigation of crime is a matter for individual chief officers.

The information requested about the use of forensic archaeologists and forensic anthropologists is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute all-party talks on a more effective legal mechanism to combat terrorism than the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. I believe that the Prevention of Terrorism Act provides the powers which are needed for the prevention and investigation of terrorist crime. I am not prepared to weaken those powers while the threat of terrorism remains. However, I am ready to consider any proposals which might improve the effectiveness of the existing powers.

Trial Judges

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the number of prosecutions during the last 10 years for offences relating to illegal approaches to trial judges; and what plans the Government have to provide for stiffer sentences to deal with such offences.

Mr. Jack: It is not possible from the information held centrally to identify offences relating to illegal approaches to trial judges from other common law offences of attempting to pervert the course of public justice.

The table shows the number of prosecutions in England and Wales from 1981 to 1991 for attempting to pervert the course of public justice. 1992 data will not be available until autumn 1993.

Number of prosecutions at magistrates' courts for the offence of attempting to pervert the course of public justice[1] under common law for the years 1981-1991
England and Wales

	Prosecutions
1981	290
1982	279
1983	333
1984	308
1985	326
1986	386
1987	652
1988	864
1989	1,139
1990	1,376
1991	1,565

[1] Under common law the offence of attempting to pervert the course of public justice includes fabrication of false evidence, causing a person to be wrongly convicted, interference with witness, etc.

Fire Safety Regulations

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has completed his re-examination and re-drafting of the proposed new fire safety regulations; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what is the estimated cost to British industry of the implementation of the proposed new fire safety regulations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to publish proposals for revised regulations and the associated guidance in the early summer. An estimate of the compliance costs for industry will be included in the consultative document.

Sheehy Inquiry

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons no *(a)* police advisers or *(b)* persons with special knowledge of policing in Scotland have been appointed to the Sheehy inquiry team; and if he will consider extending its membership to incorporate police officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend considered it important for the inquiry to be conducted by a fully independent team with expertise in a number of disciplines. The inquiry is, however, working very closely with the police service. My right hon. and learned Friend does not propose to change the composition of the inquiry team.

Police National Network

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment criteria his Department used in the recent shortlisting for the police national network; and what weight was given to the technical expertise and experience in providing communications to Her Majesty's Government of each company expressing an interest in this project.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Each company was assessed on the basis of (1) whether any circumtances of article 29 of the Services Directive (which relates to financial probity) apply to the company in question; (2) its audited accounts for the last three years; (3) its overall turnover and its turnover from operating managed telecommunications

services; (4) the managed networks which it provides; (5) the technical expertise within the organisations; (6) its total manpower and managerial staffing; (7) its technical infrastructure, equipment and facilities; and (8) the level of professional expertise in its operation of managed networks. The technical expertise of potential suppliers and their experience in providing communications to Her Majesty's Government and other users were therefore fully taken into account.

Court Escorts

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has included special requirements for pregnant women, nursing mothers and very young children in the tender documents for the court escort services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Tender documents for the court escort service in the London area have not yet been finalised, but a copy of the operational specification for the court escort service in the east midlands and Humberside area has been placed in the library of the House. It outlines the general principles concerning the welfare of prisoners. The contractor has a contractual responsibility for the welfare of prisoners, for their humane treatment and for their medical needs.

Animal Rights

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many names are currently contained in the animal rights national index.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The animal rights national index (ARNI) holds about 13,300 names.

Race Relations Legislation

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many posts in the public services are exempt from the requirements of the Race Relations Act; and in what occupations these exemptions occur.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 75(5) of the Race Relations Act 1976 states that nothing in the Act invalidates rules made for restricting employment in the public service to persons of particular birth, nationality, descent or residence. Information on the particular posts or occupations concerned is not held centrally.

EDUCATION

Adult Education

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the levels of enrolments for adult education in London for this year.

Mr. Boswell: Data for academic year 1992-93 are not yet complete. In 1991-92 there were 280,000 enrolments in adult education centres in London at the 1 November census date.

Assisted Places

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what fees were charged in the academic year 1991-92 in each school taking part in the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the following table:

Assisted places scheme

School Name	*Average Fee charged in AY 1991-92* £
Abbey School, Reading	3,183
Abingdon	3,936
Ackworth	3,633
Aldenham	6,290
Alice Ottley	3,582
Alleyns, Dulwich	4,905
Ardingly College	7,575
Arnold School, Blackpool	2,964
Ashford	4,189
Ashville College	3,999
Austin Friars	3,435
Bancrofts	3,930
Barnard Castle	3,732
Bath High GPDST	2,967
Batley Grammar	2,766
Bedales	7,251
Bedford	5,235
Bedford High	3,969
Bedford Modern	3,489
Belvedere GPDST	2,967
Berkhamsted Girls	3,936
Berkhamsted	4,929
Birkenhead	2,820
Birkenhead High GPDST	2,967
Bishop's Stortford College	6,600
Blackheath High GPDST	3,357
Bloxham, Banbury	6,003
Bolton School Boys	3,585
Bolton School Girls	3,585
Bootham, York	4,923
Bradfield College	7,762
Bradford Girls Grammar	3,261
Bradford Grammar School	3,174
Brentwood School	4,100
Brighton College	5,856
Brighton/Hove High GPDST	2,967
Bristol Cathedral	3,357
Bristol Grammar	3,189
Bromley High GPDST	3,357
Bromsgrove	4,761
Bruton Girls	2,881
Burgess Hill Girls	4,230
Bury Grammar Boys	2,790
Bury Grammar Girls	2,790
Canford	7,056
Carmel College	6,750
Casterton	4,257
Caterham	4,302
Central Newcastle High GPDST	2,967
Charterhouse	8,595
Cheadle Hulme	3,324
Cheltenham Ladies College	6,249
Chigwell	5,154
Christ's Hospital	5,826
Churchers College	4,125
City of London	4,734
City of London Freemans	4,779
City of London Girls	4,086
Clifton College, Bristol	4,710
Clifton High, Bristol	3,780
Colfes	3,705
Colston's Girls	2,946
Colston's, Bristol	2,945
Coventry, Bablake	2,883
Cranleigh	4,206
Croham Hurst	3,480
Croydon High GPDST	3,357
Culford	5,001
Dame Alice Harpur	3,261
Dame Allans Boys	2,868
Dame Allans Girls	2,868

School Name	Average Fee charged in AY 1991-92 £
Dauntseys	5,358
Denstone College	5,730
Derby High	4,644
Douai, Reading	4,644
Dover College	5,970
Downe House, Newbury	6,300
Dulwich College	5,355
Durham	5,638
Edgbaston College Girls	3,510
Edgehill College	4,123
Ellerslie	5,535
Ellesmere College	5,940
Eltham College, London	4,254
Emanuel, London SW11	3,825
Epsom College	6,315
Exeter	3,282
Farnborough Hill	3,504
Felixstowe College	5,158
Felsted, Dunmow	7,383
Forest School	3,843
Framlingham College	5,118
Francis Holland	3,888
Friends, Saffron Walden	4,665
Giggleswick, Settle	4,707
Godolphin and Latymer	4,608
Godolphin, Salisbury	5,142
Greshams	6,786
Guildford High Girls	4,011
Haberdashers Askes Boys	4,458
Haberdashers Askes Girls	3,030
Haileybury and ISC	6,693
Hampton	3,690
Harrogate College	4,804
Headington	3,594
Hereford Cathedral	3,675
Highgate	5,409
Hipperholme Grammar	2,528
Holy Child	3,540
Hulme Grammar Boys	2,985
Hulme Grammar Girls	2,985
Hurstpierpoint College	7,650
Hymers College	2,835
Ipswich	4,020
Ipswich High GPDST	2,967
James Allens Girls	4,770
John Lyons	4,155
Kent College	5,100
Kimbolton School	4,050
King Edward VI High	3,291
King Edward VI Norwich	3,474
King Edward VI Southampton	3,627
King Edward VII Lytham	2,715
King Edwards at Bath	3,261
King Edwards Birmingham	3,645
King Edwards Witley	4,800
Kings College Wimbledon	5,022
Kings High Girls, Warwick	3,074
Kings, Bruton	6,090
Kings, Chester	3,627
Kings, Macclesfield	3,465
Kings, Rochester	5,107
Kings, Tynemouth	2,880
Kings, Worcester	4,230
Kingsley	3,327
Kingston Grammar	3,948
Kingswood School, Bath	4,712
Kirkham Grammar	2,789
La Sagesse Convent	2,916
Lady Eleanor Holles	4,335
Latymer Upper	3,750
Laxton	3,930
Leeds Girls High	3,329
Leeds Grammar	3,342
Leicester Grammar	2,940
Leighton Park	6,651

School Name	Average Fee charged in AY 1991-92 £
Leys, Cambridge	6,915
Liverpool College	3,444
Lord Wandsworth College	5,832
Loreto Convent Grammar	2,421
Loughborough Grammar	3,402
Loughborough High	3,075
Magdalen College	3,743
Malvern College	7,170
Manchester Grammar	3,225
Manchester High	3,132
Marist Convent Senior	3,165
Maynard	3,195
Merchant Taylors Girls	2,997
Merchant Taylors, Liverpool	2,997
Merchant Taylors, N'wood	5,310
Mill Hill	5,964
Monkton Combe	4,976
Mount Carmel, Cheshire	2,595
Mount St. Mary's College	4,569
Mount, York	5,034
Newcastle Under Lyme	2,784
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Church High	2,985
North London Collegiate	3,804
Northampton High	3,390
Norwich High GPDST	2,967
Notting Hill/Ealing High GPDST	3,357
Nottingham Girls High GPDST	2,967
Nottingham High	3,174
Oakham	5,277
Old Palace, Croydon	3,222
Oxford High GPDST	2,967
Pangbourne College	4,740
Perse School for Boys	3,672
Perse School for Girls	3,213
Plymouth College	3,495
Pocklington	3,834
Polam Hall	3,393
Portsmouth Grammar	3,343
Portsmouth High GPDST	2,967
Prior Park College	3,825
Putney High School GPDST	3,357
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Bristol	3,324
Queen Elizabeth, Blackburn	3,135
Queen Elizabeth, Wakefield	3,162
Queen Mary, Lytham	2,715
Queens College, London	4,335
Queens College, Taunton	4,680
Queens School, Chester	2,862
Ratcliffe College	4,563
Red Maids, Bristol	3,198
Redland High, Bristol	3,108
Reed's School, Cobham	5,772
Reigate Grammar	3,648
Rendcomb College	5,694
Repton	4,875
Rossall	6,129
Royal Grammar, Guildford	4,689
Royal Grammar, Newcastle	2,895
Royal Grammar, Worcester	3,654
Ryde School	3,159
Salesian College	2,025
Scarborough College	4,143
Sedbergh	6,930
Sevenoaks, Kent	5,382
Sheffield High GPDST	2,967
Shrewsbury High GPDST	2,967
Silcoates	4,432
Sir William Perkins	3,132
Solihull	3,468
South Hampstead High GPDST	3,357
St. Albans	4,005
St. Albans High Girls	3,690
St. Ambrose College	2,517
St. Anselms College	2,592
St. Bede's College	3,198

School Name	Average Fee charged in AY 1991-92 £
St. Bees	5,778
St. Benedict's	4,155
St. Catherine's	4,725
St. Dunstan's College	3,702
St. Edmund's College	4,608
St. Edward's College	2,805
St. Felix, Southwold	4,662
St. George's College	4,920
St. Helen and St. Katherine	3,150
St. Helen's, Northwood	3,846
St. John's College, Southsea	2,875
St. John's, Leatherhead	5,778
St. Joseph's College, Ipswich	3,557
St. Joseph's College, Stoke	2,610
St. Joseph's Convent, Reading	3,225
St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate	5,775
St. Margaret's, Bushey	4,191
St. Margaret's, Exeter	3,033
St. Mary and St. Anne	5,901
St. Mary's College, Crosby	2,826
St. Mary's Convent, Cambridge	3,045
St. Mary's Hall, Brighton	4,779
St. Maurs Convent, Weybridge	3,444
St. Paul's Girls, Hammersmith	4,884
St. Paul's, Barnes	6,195
St. Peter's, York	5,205
Stafford Grammar	3,063
Stamford	3,300
Stamford High	3,300
Stockport Grammar	3,240
Stoneyhurst College	6,152
Stowe	6,993
Streatham Hill/Clapham High	3,357
Surbiton High	3,795
Sutton High GPDST	3,357
Sutton Valence	5,787
Sydenham High GPDST	3,357
Talbot Heath	3,546
Taunton	5,535
Teesside High	2,928
Tonbridge	[illegible]888
Tormead	[illegible]797
Trent College	[illegible]901
Trinity of John Whitgift	[illegible]215
Truro	[illegible]543
Truro High	3,174
University College Sch London	5,265
Upton Hall Convent	2,220
Ursuline Convent, Kent	4,035
Ursuline High, Ilford	3,441
Wakefield High	3,162
Walthamstow Hall	4,500
Warwick	3,594
Wellingborough	4,500
Wellington College	7,275
Wellington, Somerset	3,510
Wells Cathedral	4,332
West Buckland	3,885
Westholme	2,700
Westminster	4,662
Whitgift, Croydon	4,344
William Hulme Grammar	3,360
Wimbledon High GPDST	3,357
Winchester College	7,674
Wisbech Grammar	3,750
Withington Girls	2,930
Wolverhampton Grammar	3,636
Woodbridge	4,590
Woodhouse Grove	3,945
Worksop	5,077
Wrekin College	5,970
Wycliffe College	6,924
Yarm	3,615

Birmingham City Council

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when his officials asked the Birmingham city council for more information to justify its bid for capital expenditure in 1993-94 to deal with substandard places; when his officials received this information from Birmingham city council; and when he expects to take a decision on this bid for the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The Department wrote to Birmingham city council on 22 December 1992 and the authority responded on 8 January 1993. Twenty-five other LEAs were asked to provide information on the same issue and not all have yet done so. Nevertheless, I expect to announce my decisions shortly.

College Fees

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total amount of college fees in respect of students in higher education which is funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement on how such funding is distributed on behalf of the Department.

Mr. Boswell: The total amount of college fees funded by the Department in respect of undergraduate students at collegiate unversities was £46 million in the academic year 1990-91, the latest year for which full information is available. These fees are payable by local education authorities on behalf of students holding mandatory awards and are reimbursed in full by the Department.

Higher Education (Benefits in Kind)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what study he has made of the benefits in kind to the families of those participating in higher education away from home by various household income levels.

Mr. Boswell: The Department commissioned surveys of undergraduates' income and expenditure in 1986-87 and 1988-89 academic years and of mature students' income and expenditure in the 1987-88 academic year. The Department has commissioned a further survey of undergraduate students' income and expenditure which is currently being undertaken. All of these surveys have sought information on the circumstances of students who study either while living in the parental home or away from it.

London East TEC

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how much grant from his Department was paid to London East training and enterprise council for business education partnerships and to which organisations, and for what amounts, in each year since 1988;

(2) how much grant has been given by his Department to the London East training and enterprise council in each year since 1988.

Mr. Boswell: This Department has made no such grants.

Education Costs

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average annual cost met from public funds of *(a)* a nursery school place, *(b)* a primary school place, *(c)* a secondary school place and *(d)* a full-time undergraduate place in bands 1, 2 and 3.

Mr. Forth: Figures for spending on nursery and primary school pupils are not collected separately. For 1990-91, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available, the average cost per pupil at LEA-maintained schools was £1,339 per nursery and primary pupil and £2,019 per secondary pupil.

Public funding for higher education is provided through grant to the higher education funding councils and publicly funded tuition fees. The assumed average total recurrent grant per student through the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 1993-94 is £2,927. The maximum tuition fees reimbursable through mandatory awards for undergraduate courses in the academic year 1993-94 are £1,300 for classroom-based courses; £2,770 for laboratory and workshop-based courses; and £4,985 for the clinical elements of medical, dental and veterinary courses.

TRANSPORT

London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to issue guidance to London Transport on the handling of the privatisation of London Buses Ltd.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has recently written to the chairman of London Transport to give guidance on this issue. Copies of the letter have been placed in the library.

Transport Schemes, London

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all railway, light railway or underground schemes in London currently supported or proposed to be supported by public funds, which he intends should have a private sector contribution; when they commenced or will commence; in each case and for each relevant financial year, how much public funding is already allocated; and how much private sector funding he estimates will be required.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

Project name	*Start date*	*Public funding (£million cash)* 1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	*Private sector funding*
Jubilee line extension	Construction is expected to start when the current negotiations on the private sector contribution are completed.	385	460	405	£100 million cash developer contribution during construction period and a stream of payments adding upto £300 million cash over time after extension is opened.
CrossRail	Bill currently in Parliament.	80	64	65	Re-examination to assess ways of involving private sector announced in Budget statement. Results of re-examination will determine relative involvement of public and private sectors.
Channel tunnel rail link	Construction could start in 1995.	44	—	—	Private sector interest needs to be tested before decisions can be taken on the timing and amounts of public and private funding.
Docklands light railway—Lewisham extension	Construction could start this financial year.	—	—	—	The cost, of £140 million, must be met by the private sector.
Heathrow express	Main works expected to start during 1993-94.	—	—	—	The project is a joint venture with BAA as private majority partner. The total cost is estimated at £250-300 million.

The proposed Croydon tramlink project would proceed on the basis of private funding though the Government is prepared to consider an element of grant.

The possibility of securing private sector contributions to other projects will be considered at the appropriate time.

Lower Road, SE16

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what moneys are allocated for the Lower road widening scheme, London SE16, for each financial year from 1992-93 onwards; when he intends work on the scheme will commence; and when it will finish.

Mr. Norris: This is a London Borough of Southwark scheme that is jointly funded by the Department of Transport and London Docklands Development Corporation. Funds are allocated by the Department as and when necessary and as laid down by a tripartite agreement. No moneys have been allocated to date for construction works. The timing of the scheme is a matter for LB Southwark in consultation with the Department and the LDDC.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now make a statement on the arrangements, funding and commencement date of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: No. Negotiations are continuing on the private sector contribution and it would not be sensible for me to speculate when they might be concluded.

Airlines (State Assistance)

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about proposals for state aid to Aer Lingus; and what has been his response.

Mr. Norris: Concern has been expressed to me from a number of sources about reports of an injection of state

aid to Aer Lingus, and the serious distortion of competition which might result from this on many routes, including London-Dublin. The Minister for Aviation and Shipping has written to Commissioner Matutes, seeking assurance that any formal application for state aid by the Irish authorities will be very fully scrutinised in the light of the market economy investor principle and the need to avoid distortion of competition, and that member states will be given the opportunity to comment.

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has made to the European Commission about recent state assistance to Air France.

Mr. Norris: We are aware of reports of further state assistance to Air France, following the support allowed by the European Commission in 1992. Since there has been no formal notification of further support by the French authorities, we have made no formal representations to the European Commission: but on many occasions we have made clear to the Commission that all applications for state aid should be very fully scrutinised in the light of the market economy investor principle and the need to avoid distortion of competition, and that member states should be given the opportunity to comment.

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the extent to which state aid to airlines of the European Community has continued after 31 December 1992.

Mr. Norris: The responsibility for approving state aids under the treaty of Rome rests with the European Commission. The Government have consistently urged the Commission to take a tough line to combat aids which distort free fair and open competition in the air transport market. So far this year, the only state aid which has been approved by the Commission is the settling by the Portuguese Government of the deficit accumulated by the carrier TAP in operating service between the Portuguese mainland and the Atlantic islands over the 13 years to 1991. We are generally aware of other forthcoming cases and will continue to monitor the situation.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has had from the north of England regional consortium about the channel tunnel rail link; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently received a letter from the North of England regional consortium to which he has replied. My right hon. Friend and I have no objection to the contents of the reply being made public but any inquiries about the correspondence should be directed to the consortium to whom the letter was sent.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what resources will be made available to local community groups in Islington for them to make representations on the channel tunnel route to St. Pancras.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have asked Union Railways to take the lead in the public consultation on the rail link. They will be devoting engineering and environmental resources to examining worthwhile suggestions put forward for any improvements to the proposals.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if customs, immigration and security checks for international rail services will be handled on board international train services using the channel tunnel line.

Mr. Freeman: Immigration controls will be carried out on board channel tunnel day passenger services using Waterloo. Customs and security checks will be carried out in the station. All three controls on night trains using Waterloo will be carried out at the station. All three controls for channel tunnel passenger services running beyond London will be carried out on board the trains.

Midibuses

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the effect on traffic congestion of increasing use of smaller midibuses.

Mr. Norris: Midibuses are more manoeuvrable and smaller than traditional buses. They have proved to be popular with passengers. I have seen no evidence that bus size has any significant impact on traffic congestion.

Barking to Gospel Oak Railway Line

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about expenditure on maintenance and rolling stock on the Barking to Gospel Oak railway line necessary to maintain safety.

Mr. Freeman: None. Expenditure priorities are a matter for British Rail, which has a statutory duty to operate safely.

Plutonium

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the transportation of plutonium nitrate is being considered under the auspices of the Braer inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Lord Donaldson's inquiry is to advise on whether any further measures are appropriate and feasible to protect the United Kingdom coastline from pollution from merchant shipping, giving due consideration to the international and economic implications of any new measures. These terms of reference are wide enough to allow Lord Donaldson to consider the matter raised, should he decide to do so.

London Bus Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations underlay the timing of the decision to put a further 30 London bus routes out to tender; and what assessment was made of the results of previous tendering.

Mr. Norris: The decision on which routes to put to tender could not be taken until the completion of the negotiations to put all London Buses Ltd. bus routes on to a contractual basis.

Since its introduction in 1985 London Transport's route tendering programme has delivered substantial quality of service improvements and reductions in costs.

Public Transport, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1983 the capital and revenue support given to public transport in London by central and local Government at constant prices.

Mr. Norris: Grants to London Transport are as follows at 1993-94 prices: (for 1984-85, they were made by the GLC; since that year, they have been made by the Department of Transport).

£ million

Year	*Capital*	*Revenue*
1984-85	192	236
1985-86	297	187
1986-87	333	94
1987-88	269	65
1988-89	222	28
1989-90	291	58
1990-91	502	94
1991-92	557	130
1992-93	579	241

Amounts up to 1991-92 include grant for the Docklands light railway. In 1992-93 the Department of the Environment paid grant of £149 million for the Docklands light railway.

Public service obligation grant allocated by British Rail to Network SouthEast was as follows, in 1993-94 prices:

	£ million
1986-87	288
1987-88	290
1988-89	168
1989-90	97
1990-91	162
1991-92	367

No separate figures are available for London services. No comparable figures are available for pre-1986. Figures for 1992-93 are not yet available.

These figures exclude financial support by local authorities for concessionary fares in London.

Concessionary Fares

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those local authorities in England that provide concessionary fares for people of or above the age of retirement on *(a)* buses and *(b)* any other form of local public transport; and if he will list the extent of the subsidy in each case.

Mr. Freeman: I am sending the hon. Member a copy of "Concessionary Fare Schemes in Great Britain in 1992", which was produced by the Department's directorate of statistics on the basis of returns by local authorities.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the senior citizen railcard scheme will be retained to ensure concessionary fares for pensioners over the entire railway network after privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The senior railcard is a commercial initiative designed by British Rail to attract passengers and to maximise revenue by filling seats which might otherwise by empty; BR is not under any legal obligation to provide it. We believe that in a competitive environment it will be in the interests of the rail operators to continue to offer such discounts. We therefore see no need to impose requirements on operators to offer this particular discount facility. Transitional arrangements will be made to ensure that franchisees continue to honour existing railcards.

Cycle Routes, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines his Department sets for classifying the quality of cycle routes implemented by the London boroughs; and what discussions he has had with cycling organisations and representatives in setting them.

Mr. Norris: The Department has provided advice and guidance on the design and construction of cycling facilities in Local Transport Note 1/89 "Making Way for Cyclists". We consulted widely on the document before publication and were grateful for the contribution made by cycling organisations. We also hold regular meetings with the borough cycle officer group and the London Cycling Forum.

Unstaffed Railway Stations

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail stations in Greater London are unstaffed after 6 pm; and what discussions he has had with the Transport police about the effect on crime and fear of crime at stations as a result.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that statistics are not maintained in the form requested. However, of some 500 stations within the London regional passenger committee's area 56 are totally unstaffed and a further 145 are staffed on the basis of less than two full shifts on any week day. The British transport police are, of course, employed by the British Railways Board and the Secretary of State regularly meets the BR chairman and board members to discuss a wide range of matters relating to the railways, including policing and crime.

Traffic Noise, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the existing targets for acceptable noise levels of traffic in London; who is responsible for setting them; and if he will list those monitoring areas where they are being exceeded.

Mr. Norris: There are no such targets. However, the United Kingdom has recently secured EC agreement to lower limits for the noise standards to which individual vehicles are built; tighter standards for vehicles have reduced noise levels by up to 10 dB(A) over the last 10 years.

Travelcard

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Travelcard in London will be retained after his Department's proposed deregulation of buses and privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Norris: The Government believe that, in the light of travelcard's popularity, private sector bus and rail operators will be keen to offer such a facility.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Potatoes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the acreage of each variety of seed potatoes planted in each of the last four years; what is his estimate of the average yield per acre of seed and the total yield of seed of each variety, in those years and also show the tonnage *(a)* exported, with the destination and *(b)* the tonnage used for home planting.

Mr. Hanley: The available information is set in the tables. Those relating to yields and exports have been limited to the main varieties not subject to plant breeder's rights. This information cannot be disaggregated further for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Area of seed potatoes planted (hectares)

Variety (Immune)	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Alcmaria	—	0·040	0·276	1·471
Alhamra	0·270	1·229	—	—
Anosta	—	2·420	1·100	—
Antar	0·025	—	—	—
Arkula	2·240	1·500	—	—
Arma	3·940	2·694	1·000	—
Arran Banner	265·694	385·679	310·756	254·253
Arran Comet	24·993	32·584	14·780	13·969
Arran Consul	102·666	107·357	72·378	108·380
Arran Victory	5·800	9·694	6·260	7·188
Avalanche	0·400	4·020	25·907	30·231
Ballydoon	0·840	0·706	0·704	1·448
Balmoral	—	2·193	11·304	11·470
Blanka	—	—	—	0·030
Cara	71·102	—	—	—
Carlingford	8·169	10·800	10·700	10·600
Costella	—	—	—	0·020
Craig's Alliance	3·650	10·643	7·861	5·797
Cultra	5·020	19·519	35·828	16·930
Desiree	617·440	859·448	730·528	982·922
Dunbar Rover	2·200	1·917	0·750	3·086
Dunbar Standard	73·733	88·864	78·123	88·723
Dundrod	44·590	56·150	79·041	120·884
Dundrum	2·748	2·300	3·198	—
Dunluce	23·285	22·388	19·170	15·965
Estima	163·518	172·001	83·838	84·917
Famosa	2·410	1·200	0·180	—
Fianna	—	—	0·370	1·740
Foxton	6·846	10·690	3·092	1·419
Golden Wonder	2·000	1·000	—	0·955
Home Guard	139·551	155·551	120·687	122·191
Kerr's Pink	202·551	195·883	209·975	324·882
Kestrel	—	—	—	0·400
Kingston	2·400	1·490	1·230	—
Kondor	7·700	11·030	3·400	0·310
Majestic	5·330	12·550	7·950	8·048
Marfona	12·100	2·700	2·739	3·350
Maris Bard	42·687	59·210	68·644	33·430
Maris Peer	37·863	42·760	40·016	23·526
Maris Piper	11·932	13·148	18·443	9·921
Nadine	9·835	34·501	19·915	9·650
Naven	2·214	1·509	2·418	13·627
Nieta	1·120	3·800	3·400	2·510
Penta	17·139	22·083	23·290	10·870
Pentland Crown	54·862	44·525	38·309	21·582
Pentland Dell	696·540	654·810	628·796	637·177
Pentland Hawk	30·320	23·134	12·100	10·126
Pentland Ivory	8·575	13·000	7·740	10·040
Pentland Javelin	65·570	94·105	65·288	32·529
Pentland Squire	74·054	60·125	32·720	13·489
Record	134·037	248·851	168·189	207·199
Romano	52·357	64·748	53·400	19·441
Russet Burbank	0·350	2·500	8·050	0·350
Sante	6·282	22·820	23·210	10·100
Seaforde	0·930	—	—	—
Skirza	0·290	—	—	—
Sperrin	1·101	2·900	5·800	0·600
Stemster	1·720	2·851	2·400	4·320
Stroma	0·065	0·432	1·450	1·735
Toledo	0·700	2·900	—	—
Ulster Prince	9·545	15·111	9·385	7·759
Ulster Sceptre	88·627	97·071	75·352	26·718

Variety (Immune)	1989	1990	1991	1992
Waregem	0·065	0·330	—	—
Wilja	62·698	72·374	62·200	18·890
Total (Immune)	3,214·689	3,785·838	3,213·640	3,347·168

Variety (Non Immune)	1989	1990	1991	1992
Agria	—	—	0·150	0·570
Atlantic	—	—	0·080	0·830
Bintje	—	—	—	0·100
British Queen	23·147	51·720	41·666	39·023
Hermes	—	—	—	1·000
Kennebec	27·228	34·288	31·489	20·557
Kenzy	0·065	—	—	—
King Edward	489·538	381·008	243·867	243·617
Red Pontiac	—	0·300	2·277	1·901
Royal Kidney	0·150	1·910	0·970	—
Sharpe's Express	4·014	7·225	3·790	1·311
Sherine	1·535	4·239	1·900	—
Turia	—	1·600	3·580	0·500
Up-To-Date	92·765	70·848	72·448	82·849
Yukon Gold	—	—	—	0·510
Total (Non-Immune)	638·442	553·138	402·217	392·768
Grand Total	3,853·131	4,338·976	3,615·857	3,739·936

Estimated yield of seed potatoes (tonnes)

Variety	1989 Average[1]	1989 Total	1990 Average	1990 Total	1991 Average	1991 Total	1992 Average	1992 Total
Arran Banner	20	5,300	20·9	8,100	16·7	5,200	16·5	4,200
Desiree	19·9	12,100	23·5	20,200	21	15,300	23·7	23,200
King Edward	22·5	10,400	21·1	7,300	20·7	5,000	22·4	5,300
Kerrs' Pink	16·1	3,200	19·2	3,800	15·8	3,200	15·8	5,100
Pentland Dell	23·6	16,000	27·5	17,700	25·5	15,800	26·6	16,800
Record	21·7	2,700	23·9	5,800	20	2,900	23·3	4,400
Others	20.6	28,100	22·8	34,400	20·9	26,700	22·2	22,700

[1] Expressed in tonnes/hectare within the size range 35 to 60mm.

Estimated usage of seed potatoes for home planting (tonnes)

	Tonnes
1989	24,300
1990	26,500
1991	24,200
1992	25,200

Tonnages of seed potatoes exported

Variety	Balearic Islands	Canary Islands	Egypt	Malta	Morocco	Portugal	ROI	Other countries	Total
1989 Crop									
Arran Banner	263	611	—	1,025	—	3,130	—	347	5,376
Desiree	10	—	—	—	2,600	8,008	—	314	10,932
Kerrs Pink	—	744	—	—	—	—	163	—	907
King Edward	—	1,598	4,000	—	—	24	11	—	5,633
Pentland Dell	675	—	—	—	—	—	790	48	1,513
Record	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,088	—	1,088
Others, including protected varieties	236	1,305	3	1	10	2,558	869	844	5,826
Total	1,184	4,258	4,003	1,026	2,610	13,720	2,921	1,553	31,275
1990 Crop									
Arran Banner	198	516	—	1,019	—	3,934	22	372	6,061
Desiree	91	8	—	—	2,508	11,753	2	2,444	16,806
Kerrs Pink	—	1,004	—	—	—	—	178	—	1,182
King Edward	—	1,412	192	—	—	12	60	—	1,676
Pentland Dell	425	—	—	—	—	58	793	85	1,361
Record	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,796	—	1,796

Variety	Balearic Islands	Canary Islands	Egypt	Malta	Morocco	Portugal	ROI	Other countries	Total
Others, including protected varieties	86	1,253	10	11	12	1,997	909	1,259	5,537
Total	800	4,193	202	1,030	2,520	17,754	3,760	4,160	34,419
1991 Crop									
Arran Banner	279	381	173	1,050	—	3,203	—	469	5,555
Desiree	34	15	—	—	3,578	8,530	12	183	12,352
Kerrs Pink	—	860	—	—	—	—	219	—	1,079
King Edward	—	1,222	2,000	—	—	29	67	22	3,340
Pentland Dell	418	—	—	—	—	6	1,168	132	1,724
Record	—	—	—	—	—	—	567	—	567
Others, including protected varieties	237	1,212	26	—	2	1,531	1,031	988	5,027
Total	968	3,690	2,199	1,050	3,580	13,299	3,064	1,794	29,644
1992 Crop to 13 March 1993									
Arran Banner	221	321	—	1,000	—	1,786	—	163	3,491
Desiree	—	—	—	—	1,205	5,059	—	203	6,467
Kerrs Pink	—	711	—	—	—	—	189	17	917
King Edward	—	1,062	800	—	—	3	8	—	1,873
Pentland Dell	27	—	—	—	—	4	35	89	155
Record	—	—	—	—	—	—	90	100	190
Others, including protected varieties	89	872	17	32	45	822	221	794	2,892
Total	337	2,966	817	1,032	1,250	7,674	543	1,366	15,985

Potatoes

Mr. Williams Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* for October 1989, *(b)* for October 1990, *(c)* for October 1991 and *(d)* for each month since October 1992 to the latest available date the price ex-farm of each of the principal varieties of seed potatoes, and of each of the categories of ware potatoes ex-farm sold in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested on ware potatoes is given in the following tables. The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland does not collect information on the price of seed potatoes.

Average price per tonne of Ware potatoes Ex-Farm

Category	1989 £	1990 £	1991 £	1992 £
(1) Early varieties	—	—	—	—
(2) Arran Victory, Kerrs' Pink	106·69	74·20	102·65	72·45
(3) Dunbar Standard	[1]96·84	63·39	80·16	55·55
(4) Pentland Dell		56·16	69·59	37·13
(5) King Edward, Arran Consul, Arran Banner	123·99	72·38	84·02	48·69
(6) Other varieties	88·00	55·37	68·73	43·08

[1]Information is not available for the varieties separately.

Provisional average price per tonne of Ware Potatoes Ex-Farm from November 1992

Category	1992 November £	December £	1993 January £	February £	March £
(1) Early varieties	—	—	—	—	—
(2) Arran Victory, Kerrs' Pink	71·15	75·11	86·93	70·36	63·65
(3) Dunbar Standard	57·39	63·82	60·79	54·13	41·16
(4) Pentland Dell	36·20	45·15	47·39	42·70	30·20
(5) King Edward, Arran Consul, Arran Banner	52·13	33·57	56·80	49·05	—
(6) Other varieties	45·84	45·89	44·09	40·69	35·26

Equal Opportunities

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of each health and social services board.

Mr. Hanley: The costs of equal opportunities monitoring in the health and social services boards are shown in the table. The costs not only include the monitoring and analysis of perceived religious affiliations within the boards but also the cost of the collection and analysis of information relating to gender and disability issues.

Board	Cost £
Eastern	78,000
Northern	66,435
Southern	45,000
Western	54,300

Firearms Licences

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many gun licences are held in Northern Ireland; and what is the number per head of population.

Mr. Mates: Firearms licensing is the responsibility of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He has advised me that at the end of February this year a total of 87,421 firearm certificates were held in Northern Ireland. This figure equates to approximately one certificate per 13 persons aged 18 and over.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many farmers are in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in *(a)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(b)* disadvantaged areas in each county in Northern Ireland containing less favoured area land.

Mr. Hanley: The number of farmers in receipt of 1992 hill livestock compensatory allowances is as follows:

	SDA	DA
County Antrim	1,703	1,330
County Armagh	956	1,409
County Down	1,386	904
County Fermanagh	3,213	90
County Londonderry	1,667	816
County Tyrone	3,368	1,683

Livestock Auctions

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the turnover in terms of value, of livestock auctions for each county in Northern Ireland; and how many auctions account for that value in each county.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not available.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress in establishing an executive agency under the next steps initiative to carry out the work of driver and vehicle licensing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Preparations for the establishment of an executive agency to carry out the work of driver and vehicle licensing in Northern Ireland are well in hand. A chief executive (designate) was appointed on 1 March 1993. However, further consideration of the business plan for the first year of the agency's operation is required before I will be in a position to finalise targets for the agency which will ensure that there will be a satisfactory level of improved customer service and value for money. Accordingly, it has not been possible to establish the agency on the target date of 1 April 1993 but I hope to be in a position to announce a new date for the launch of the agency shortly.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Integrated Administration and Control System

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will carry out and publish a survey of the penalties other EC countries are applying to the integrated administration and control system; and what information he has as to the date set for compliance in each other country.

Mr. Curry: The penalties for late or inaccurate applications are laid down in the EC regulations and apply equally in all 12 member states. Details are set out in full at annexes 6, 7 and 8 of the IACS explanatory booklet. Member states may impose additional penalties at the national level. Under the EC regulations, all member states have to set a deadline not later than 15 May this year for receipt of completed application forms. The majority of member states have deadlines of 14 or 15 May.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers are in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in *(a)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(b)* disadvantaged areas in each county in England containing less-favoured area land.

Mr. Gummer: The table shows the number of claims paid under the 1992 hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme from producers farming eligible land wholly within the severely disadvantaged area (SDA), or the disadvantaged area (DA) or on mixed land (i.e., SDA combined with DA land).

	SDA	DA	Mixed
Cheshire	117	26	35
Cleveland	5	17	4
Cornwall	58	561	137
Cumbria	1,501	411	868
Derbyshire	621	177	140
Devon	797	699	113
Durham	455	140	108
Greater Manchester	111	70	32
Hereford and Worcester	191	125	109
Lancashire	413	434	307
Northumberland	642	148	249
North Yorkshire	960	401	715
Scilly Isles	6	Nil	Nil
Shropshire	380	122	233
Somerset	264	23	43
South Yorkshire	50	59	33
Staffordshire	232	275	112
Tyne and Wear	Nil	7	Nil
West Yorkshire	572	130	88

Livestock Auctions

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the turnover in terms of value, of livestock auctions for each county in England; and how many auctions account for that value in each county.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is not readily available.

However, to give an indication of the distribution of sales through auction markets the table provides the total number (rather than value) of cattle, sheep, pigs and calves sold through livestock auctions in England by county.

Sales through livestock auction markets in 1991 by county (number of animals)

County	*Cattle*	*Sheep*	*Pigs*	*Calves*	*Total*
Avon	15,886	41,741	2,512	14,433	74,572
Bedfordshire	692	36,057	26	169	36,944
Berkshire	2,967	8,814	2,795	2,235	16,811
Buckinghamshire	944	16,884	—	—	17,828
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	112,995	164,638	36,492	88,823	402,948
Cornwall	107,242	262,870	7,359	31,489	408,960
Cumbria	256,931	2,110,920	10,232	35,823	2,413,906
Derbyshire	134,708	265,847	11,388	44,546	456,489
Devon	146,942	925,257	12,198	75,333	1,159,730
Dorset	30,275	74,486	4,898	46,211	155,870
County Durham	52,675	372,802	26,996	11,772	464,245
Essex	24,507	23,961	7,865	4,247	60,580
Gloucestershire	74,292	318,578	19,031	40,067	451,968
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcestershire	119,308	913,022	16,389	21,811	1,070,530
Hertfordshire	4,162	32,908	669	1,323	39,062
Humberside	17,708	82,130	129,716	1,639	231,193
Kent	27,627	345,807	8,737	5,800	387,971
Lancashire	131,236	524,688	3,605	37,412	696,941
Leicestershire	36,585	295,026	12,047	17,500	361,158
Lincolnshire	26,143	152,745	8,445	2,556	189,889
Middlesex	383	—	893	79	1,355
Norfolk	41,015	60,531	53,411	3,757	158,714
Northamptonshire	23,224	110,503	6,573	5,667	145,967
Northumbria	107,603	850,217	11,115	1,162	970,097
Nottinghamshire	38,816	99,327	27	3,617	141,787
Oxfordshire	108,326	470,915	112,886	17,552	709,679
Shropshire	154,301	818,791	32,951	60,687	1,066,730
Somerset	155,678	501,800	21,200	89,839	768,517
Staffordshire	54,731	159,306	55,246	13,698	282,981
Suffolk	25,552	49,317	144,767	4,553	224,189
Surrey	41,517	71,031	5,300	8,598	126,446
Sussex	27,754	131,687	2,184	4,004	165,629
Warwickshire	33,189	263,760	54,765	7,842	359,556
Wiltshire	59,945	60,006	15,627	27,958	163,536
North Yorkshire	251,120	1,367,159	407,745	38,908	2,064,932
South Yorkshire	4,313	8,328	15,929	533	29,103
West Yorkshire	46,003	236,477	18,925	8,242	309,647
Total	2,497,295	12,228,336	1,280,944	779,885	16,786,460

EC Agri-environment Package

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans there are to renegotiate the EC agri-environment package; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what monitoring and targets for monitoring will be set by *(a)* the EC and *(b)* the United Kingdom for schemes operating under the agri-environment package; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government's proposals for implementing the EC Agri-Environment Regulation (2078/92) were issued for public consultation on 26 March and we have no plans to seek a renegotiation of the regulation. Monitoring of schemes operating under the regulation is the responsibility of individual member states and we will determine our monitoring arrangements when individual schemes are finalised after the public consultation period.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much will be spent or has been spent in each year from 1990-91 to 1995-96 on *(a)* stage 1 environmentally sensitive areas, *(b)* stage 2 ESAs, *(c)* stage 3 ESAs and *(d)* stage 4 ESAs, identifying how much of the total is allocated for the public access payments (i) nitrate sensitive areas, (ii) moorland scheme, (iii) habitat improvement scheme, (iv) set-aside management identifying how much of the total will be for public access payments and (v) organic farming; if he will identify which schemes are part of the agri-environment package; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: There is a single budget for the Ministry's environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs). Expenditure on payments to farmers in English ESAs was £7·5 million in 1990-91, £8·0 million in 1991-92 and is forecast to be £10·8 million in 1992-93. Planned expenditure is £30·2 million in 1993-94, £42·6 million in 1994-95 and £43.1 million in 1995-96. The figures for the last two years include the

proposed payments for public access in ESAs. Expenditure on payments to farmers in the pilot nitrate sensitive areas (NSAs) was £0.3 million in 1990-91, £1.0 million in 1991-92, and is forecast to be £1.4 million in 1992-93. Planned expenditure is £1.6 million in each of the years 1993-94 to 1995-96. In addition to this expenditure on ESAs and pilot NSAs, we have issued for public consultation proposals for a moorland scheme, a habitat improvement scheme, a meadowland scheme for public access to set-aside land and an organic scheme, and will shortly be issuing proposals for new nitrate measures. Planned expenditure on payments to farmers under these proposed new measures in England is £0.2 million in 1993-94, £4·5 million in 1994-95 and £18·8 million in 1995-96. The precise allocation between the schemes will be decided in the light of the results of public consultation.

Grant Schemes

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of his grant schemes currently operating are monitored; what is the target for that monitoring; what action is taken if abuses are discovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: All applications for aid under the Ministry's capital grant schemes are carefully checked to ensure that they are valid and comply with the rules of the scheme. The action which is taken if abuses are discovered will depend on the circumstances but can include loss of grant and prosecution.

Integrated Admission Control Scheme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library copies of the equivalent of the integrated administration control scheme forms for each of the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Curry: I will place copies in their original languages in the Library when they are available.

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of primary school children in each local education authority area in Wales speak Welsh fluently as a second language; and what the corresponding figures were for each year since 1977.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information collected about the percentages of pupils, aged five and over, in maintained primary schools, who speak Welsh as a second language, are shown in the following tables. Prior to 1986 the school census sought information on the proportion of pupils who speak Welsh as a second language. This information is shown in table 1. Since 1986 information about the fluency of second language Welsh speakers has been collected under two separate categories as shown in table 2.

Table 1

	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Clwyd	5·7	6·9	6·1	5·4	5·6	6·9	7·8	8·1	8·3
Dyfed	8·8	10·0	11·4	12·5	12·3	13·6	14·2	15·0	17·4
Gwent	0·2	0·4	0·4	0·7	0·7	0·9	1·0	1·1	1·2
Gwynedd	17·4	18·4	19·8	20·4	22·1	22·4	26·6	27·1	31·9
Mid Glamorgan	3·9	4·6	5·4	5·9	6·3	6·8	7·3	7·6	8·2
Powys	6·3	6·9	4·4	4·9	7·1	5·8	7·1	6·9	6·5
South Glamorgan	1·0	1·2	1·3	1·8	3·0	1·7	1·5	2·3	2·6
West Glamorgan	2·8	2·8	3·2	4·0	4·9	3·2	3·4	3·0	3·2

Table 2

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Clwyd						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	5·0	5·5	5·9	5·9	5·7	6·1
Speak Welsh but not fluently	22·1	22·7	24·0	24·9	27·1	26·9
Dyfed						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	8·0	8·4	9·0	10·3	11·1	12·9
Speak Welsh but not fluently	21·2	20·3	22·7	24·9	25·3	26·5
Gwent						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	0·9	1·4	1·3	1·4	[illegible]	1·8
Speak Welsh but not fluently	0·4	0·4	0·2	0·2	[illegible]·9	3·5
Gwynedd						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	18·4	18·6	19·5	19·7	21·4	21·3
Speak Welsh but not fluently	31·3	33·5	32·0	33·0	32·2	32·9
Mid Glamorgan						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	8·8	9·1	9·0	8·6	9·3	9·9
Speak Welsh but not fluently	4·5	4·3	5·5	8·5	7·6	9·5
Powys						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	3·6	4·2	4·2	5·3	5·3	5·1
Speak Welsh but not fluently	12·4	15·6	21·3	13·6	21·0	29·8

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
South Glamorgan						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	2·8	2·1	2·6	3·3	3·6	2·7
Speak Welsh but not fluently	5·1	5·8	10·6	7·0	7·6	8·2
West Glamorgan						
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	2·4	2·5	3·3	3·4	3·6	4·0
Speak Welsh but not fluently	5·2	7·1	4·1	7·1	10·5	14·9

Notes: At September each year. Figures are derived from assessments made by headteachers.
The figures for 1986 onwards are not directly comparable with those for 1985 and preceding years. From September 1986 the wording and format of the question on Welsh speaking ability was changed to permit a more detailed analysis of Welsh medium education.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what change there has been in the percentage of fluent Welsh-speaking primary school children in each local education authority area in Wales since 1986-87.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The percentage of children in primary schools who speak Welsh fluently as a first language in each school education authority in Wales since 1986-87 are shown in the following table.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Clwyd						
Speak Welsh at home	5·2	4·7	4·3	5·2	4·3	4·1
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	5·0	5·5	5·9	5·9	5·7	6·1
Dyfed						
Speak Welsh at home	20·8	20·1	19·5	18·8	18·9	18·2
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	8·0	8·4	9·0	10·3	11·1	12·9
Gwent						
Speak Welsh at home	0·1	0·1	0·5	0·2	0·2	0·6
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	0·9	1·4	1·3	1·4	1·5	1·8
Gwynedd						
Speak Welsh at home	40·7	40·2	39·2	39·5	39·5	39·5
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	18·4	18·6	19·5	19·7	21·4	21·3
Mid Glamorgan						
Speak Welsh at home	0·6	0·7	1·0	0·9	0·9	0·9
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	8·8	9·1	9·0	8·6	9·3	9·9
Powys						
Speak Welsh at home	5·6	5·7	5·5	5·9	5·5	5·5
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	3·6	4·2	4·2	5·3	5·3	5·1
South Glamorgan						
Speak Welsh at home	1·2	1·2	1·3	1·2	1·3	1·8
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	2·8	2·1	2·6	3·3	3·6	2·7
West Glamorgan						
Speak Welsh at home	2·8	2·8	2·8	2·9	3·1	3·4
Do not speak Welsh at home but speak it with fluency	2·4	2·5	3·3	3·4	3·6	4·0

Note: At September each year. These figures are derived from assessments made by head teachers.

Health Authority Administration

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the health authorities in Wales the number of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff who are employed on administration for the latest date for which figures are available, together with the corresponding figures for each of the past six years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is essential that the NHS is sufficiently staffed at the administrative level to manage effectively its record budget, in the best interests of patients.

The available information relates to staff in the administrative and clerical group, which includes senior managers. The figures include staff within the groups performing clinically related duties which account for over 25 per cent. of the total, so freeing clerical staff to concentrate their skills and experience on direct patient care.

Part of the increase in the size of this group is due to the transfer of some nursing and other professional staff to the senior manager grades.

The 1992 figures for Pembrokeshire are not readily available and I will supply these as soon as possible.

Administrative and Clerical Staff[1,2,3]

	1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Pembrokeshire	127	44	141	65	149	69	165	68	192	86	214	72	n/a	n/a
Clwyd	588	239	635	290	656	303	671	303	713	330	784	366	851	420
East Dyfed	452	88	464	115	461	118	511	137	581	157	627	169	652	194
Gwent	682	406	707	486	715	477	764	502	770	532	796	544	803	544
Gwynedd	436	140	438	165	429	164	460	177	469	158	506	159	572	173
Mid Glamorgan	880	279	889	349	883	342	921	367	1,010	384	1,047	402	1,056	425
Powys	138	29	181	37	181	43	190	47	208	61	236	55	242	67
South Glamorgan	1,019	531	1,128	600	1,207	665	1,222	675	1,266	718	1,355	776	1,471	848
West Glamorgan	620	205	681	261	722	255	767	295	840	298	847	332	897	365

[1]At 30 September.
[2]Including staff performing clinically related duties.
[3]Including senior managers whose conditions were restructured and included in 1989-90 to accommodate second and third level managers from all disciplines.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of a connection between cases of hepatitis and dysentery and the disconnection of household water supplies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Dysentery and hepatitis A are commonly spread by direct contact between individuals. I am aware of no evidence of a direct causal association between cases of hepatitis and dysentery and the disconnection of household water supplies.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farmers are in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in *(a)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(b)* disadvantaged areas in each county in Wales containing less favoured area land.

Mr. David Hunt: The numbers who received HLCAs in 1992 were as follows:

	Severely disadvantaged areas	*Disadvantaged areas*
Clwyd	1,464	100
Dyfed	2,315	2,268
Gwent	407	371
Gwynedd	1,912	1,001
Mid Glamorgan	453	51
Powys	3,809	327
South Glamorgan	6	1
West Glamorgan	276	85
Total	10,642	4,204

Livestock Auctions

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the turnover in terms of value, of livestock auctions for each county in Wales; and how many auctions account for that value in each county.

Mr. David Hunt: I do not have this information. However, the Livestock Auctioneers' Market Committee for England and Wales calculates information on throughput by county and these are shown in the following table:

Throughput 1991

County	*Number of Livestock*											
	Store Cattle	*Store Sheep*	*Store Pigs*	*Calves*	*Prime Cattle*	*Prime Sheep*	*Prime Pigs*	*Total Cattle*	*Total Sheep*	*Total Pigs*	*Calves*	*Total Livestock*
Clwyd	17,506	98,356	1,351	12,951	28,122	723,494	9,648	45,628	821,850	10,999	12,951	891,428
Dyfed	64,992	188,217	0	65,622	53,693	425,157	3,470	1,118,686	613,374	3,470	65,622	801,151
Glamorgan	4,610	71,425	0	1,442	10,907	100,090	23	15,517	171,515	23	1,442	188,497
Gwent	26,036	24,402	6	7,821	8,492	215,389	0	34,528	239,791	6	7,821	282,146
Gwynedd	39,183	198,951	638	4,177	22,291	546,049	0	61,474	745,000	638	4,177	811,289
Powys	68,209	252,368	6,865	4,621	24,418	1,249,810	5,851	92,627	1,502,176	12,716	4,621	1,612,142
Total for Wales	220,536	833,719	8,860	96,634	147,923	3,259,989	18,992	368,459	4,093,706	27,852	96,634	4,586,653

Psychogeriatric Care Beds

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the total in each district health authority of NHS funded psychogeriatric continuing care beds currently available;

(2) how many psychogeriatric continuing care beds are funded by the NHS in the independent sector in each district health authority;

(3) how many NHS funded psychogeriatric continuing care beds were available in 1980, 1985 and 1990 in each health authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information does not distinguish between continuing care, acute and assessment beds, but the average numbers of daily available psychogeriatric beds for the years specified and for the latest available year were as follows:

	1980	1985	1990-91	1991-92
Clwyd	10·3	10·0	91·5	94·2
East Dyfed	—	34·0	165·0	137·2
Gwent	239·0	338·0	327·0	338·9
Gwynedd	—	9·0	73·0	75·4
Mid Glamorgan	26·5	56·0	521·3	449·8
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	13·0	101·3
South Glamorgan	—	—	229·4	229·0
West Glamorgan	—	38·9	181·5	235·8
Wales	275·8	485·9	1,601·6	1,661·5

The apparent large increase in beds between 1980 and 1990-91 is principally due to a reclassification of mental illness beds following the recognition of psychogeriatrics as a separate specialty by the royal colleges in 1989.

Information on the numbers of such beds funded by the NHS in Wales in the independent sector is not held centrally.

Respite Care Beds

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many respite care beds are provided in each district health authority; what is the waiting time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not available centrally.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his anwer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *331*, on what date the postponed inward investment mission to Japan by the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency is now expected to take place.

Mr. David Hunt: In June.

Homes for the Elderly

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of beds in each county, in county council homes for the elderly.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The most recently available information on the number of places in local authority residential homes for the elderly is shown in the following table.

	Number of places at 31 March 1992
Clwyd	676
Dyfed	1,041
Gwent	953
Gwynedd	786
Mid Glamorgan	1,211
Powys	428
South Glamorgan	293
West Glamorgan	698

Continuing Care Provision

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the likely future provision for continuing care in district health authorities, instancing the likely number of beds.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally.

Elderly People

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in each district health authority are aged 65 years and over.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The 1991 mid year estimate of the population aged 65 and over in each district health authority in Wales is shown in the following table:

	Thousands
Clwyd	73·6
East Dyfed	46·3
Pembrokeshire	19·5
Gwent	72·0
Gwynedd	47·1
Mid Glamorgan	84·7
Powys	22·5
South Glamorgan	63·7
West Glamorgan	65·3

Source: Registrar General's Provisional 1991 Mid Year Estimate of Resident Population.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research is being conducted in hospitals or medical research centres in Wales into myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is funding no such research. Information on research projects that may be funded from other sources is not held centrally.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many visits of four nights' duration or longer were undertaken by British tourists within Wales in each year since 1985.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of visits of four nights' duration or longer by British tourists within Wales is given in the following table:

millions

Year	*Visitors*
[1]1985	5·0
[1]1986	5·3
[1]1987	4·8
[1]1988	3·9
[2]1989	4·1
[2]1990	3·6
[2]1991	4·1

Sources:
[1] British Tourism Survey (monthly).
[2] United Kingdom Tourism Survey.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of tourists in Wales in each year since 1985 took part in *(a)* hill walking/mountaineering, *(b)* sea fishing, *(c)* other water sports, *(d)* riding/pony trekking, *(e)* pleasure motoring and *(f)* other activities; and what information he has on what proportion of tourists in each case were (i) British domestic tourists, (ii) European overseas visitors and (iii) visitors from the rest of the world.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information requested is available only for British tourists since 1989. These figures are shown in the following table.

Activities pursued on holiday[1]	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
All holiday trips (millions)	6·5	6·0	6·6
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
No particular activity	42	46	48
Any activities, of which	58	54	52
hill-walking/mountaineering[2]	29	24	23
sea fishing	3	4	4
other water sports[3]	29	30	28
riding/pony trekking	2	2	2
pleasure motoring	n/a	n/a	n/a
other activities	47	50	46

Source: United Kingdom Tourism Survey.
[1] The activities do not add up to 100 per cent. due to some people being classified under more than one activity.
[2] Includes: hiking, rambling, orienteering, rock climbing, abseiling, caving and potholing.
[3] Includes: coarse or game fishing, water skiing, power boating, swimming, yachting, boating, canoeing, windsurfing and other sailing.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Ancient Monuments Board for Wales

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the 37th annual report of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The 37th annual report of the Ancient Monuments Board for Wales has been published today. The report covers the financial year 1990-91 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Council Tax

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide details of the council tax set by local authorities in Wales for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: The average council tax for a band C property set by local authorities in Wales for 1993-94 is £292. This is before account is taken of exemptions and discount under the new system. Around two-thirds of properties in Wales are within band C and the lower valuation bands A and B. Details of the band C council tax set by each county and district council in Wales are in the following table:

Average Band C council tax in Wales, 1993-94[1]

£

	District purposes[2]	*Community purposes (average)*	*County purposes*	*Average Band C Council Tax*
Counties:				
Clwyd	45	14	275	334
Dyfed	33	21	261	315
Gwent	46	6	224	276
Gwynedd	53	9	234	296
Mid Glamorgan	37	10	211	258
Powys	43	11	216	270
South Glamorgan	52	7	202	260
West Glamorgan	41	9	272	322
Districts:				
Alyn and Deeside	45	20	275	340
Colwyn	44	2	275	322
Delyn	49	16	275	339
Glyndwr	34	10	275	320
Rhuddlan	48	12	275	336
Wrexham Maelor	45	19	275	340
Carmarthen	20	29	262	310
Ceredigion	43	14	262	318
Dinefwr	40	9	262	310
Llanelli	48	48	258	354
Preseli Pembrokeshire	29	11	262	302
South Pembrokeshire	13	15	262	290
Blaenau Gwent	38	5	226	269
Islwyn	46	0	225	272
Monmouth	47	10	226	282
Newport	54	1	222	277
Torfaen	40	13	226	278
Aberconwy	54	7	234	295
Arfon	47	12	234	292
Dwyfor	40	6	234	279

	District purposes[1]	Community purposes (average)	County purposes	Average Band C Council Tax
Meirionnydd	65	8	234	307
Ynys Môn	55	13	234	301
Cynon Valley	45	1	209	255
Merthyr Tydfil	41	1	209	251
Ogwr	35	7	211	253
Rhondda	40	0	209	249
Rhymney Valley	35	9	211	256
Taff Ely	31	35	211	277
Brocknock	45	18	216	279
Montgomeryshire	42	9	216	267
Radnorshire	41	6	216	264
Cardiff	56	1	202	258
Vale of Glamorgan	43	20	202	265
Port Talbot	39	2	272	313
Llŵ Valley	25	16	272	313
Neath	43	27	272	342
Swansea	46	3	272	321
Wales	43	11	237	292

[1] Provisional. After taking into account surpluses/deficits on collection funds.
[2] For counties, district figures are the averages of the tax levels for all districts within the county.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Catering Facilities (Visitors)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *439* what plans his Committee now has to arrange for catering facilities to be available to visitors to the Palace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The Committee hopes to report to the House on this matter soon after the Easter recess.

Young Enterprise (Exhibition)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to "Young Enterprise—30th Anniversary of Business Practice in Education" to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 7 to 11 June.

Sittings of the House

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Lord President of the Council what actions he proposes to take to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House of Session 1991-92.

Mr. Newton: Discussions are continuing through the usual channels.

PRIME MINISTER

Environment

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Prime Minister in how many instances papers for Cabinet and for ministerial committees have included a note of significant costs or benefits to the environment, during the course of the past year.

The Prime Minister: "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", published in May 1992, states that memoranda circulated to Cabinet or a ministerial committee should, where appropriate, cover any significant costs or benefits to the environment—paragraph 1.2. I do not propose to give details of papers considered by Cabinet or Cabinet Committees.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what matters in regard to the control of nuclear proliferation were discussed at his meeting with the President of Turkmenistan on 29 March.

The Prime Minister: During our discussions President Niyazov confirmed to me that all nuclear weapons had been withdrawn from Turkmenistan, in accordance with an agreement between Turkemenistan and Russia.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister whether he discussed *(a)* the prospects of Pakistan joining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and *(b)* the risks of nuclear proliferation in Asia during his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart on 29 March.

The Prime Minister: Nawaz Sharif and I discussed these matters briefly. The Pakistan Government are well aware of our views.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *46*, if he will set out the reasons underlying the assessment of the indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty as being in the interests of all signatories.

The Prime Minister: The prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is vital to the security of the whole world. We believe that the non-proliferation treaty represents the best available means of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and that therefore it is in the interests of all states parties to secure the indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995.

Question Time

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy when announcing his engagements to Parliament in Question Time to give details of the persons he has met and plans to meet and the meetings he has attended and plans to attend that day.

The Prime Minister: No.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

The Prime Minister: Paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" cannot concern such appointments as they cover the need for Ministers to consult me on appointments which they make.

Egypt

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister what levels of United Kingdom aid Egypt will receive during 1993-94; what account, in allocating this aid, is taken of the Egyptian Government's human rights record; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Current commitments for 1993-94 are some £5·3 million. We are working with the Egyptian Government to develop new projects in support of economic reform, the environment and education. Human rights and good government are factors which the Government take into account in determining their aid policy.

HEALTH

Chairmen and Directors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by *(a)* regional health authority, *(b)* district health authority, *(c)* family health service authority and *(d)* hospital trusts in England the total emoluments and expenses paid to (i) chairmen and (ii) non-executive directors in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: Information for 1991-92, as reported in annual accounts and financial returns submitted to the Department, has been placed in the Library.

Mental Illness

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the national average cost of caring for a mentally ill person in *(a)* a mental illness hospital, *(b)* a general hospital psychiatric unit, *(c)* a four to six bed group home, *(d)* a staffed hospital and *(e)* in the patients's own home.

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average revenue cost of a mentally ill person who has been moved out of hospitals into a small care in the community home; what was the corresponding revenue cost when the person concerned was in a hospital; and what is the average capital cost of the move.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally. Specialty cost returns submitted to the Department for 1991-92 indicate the average daily cost for patients using a bed—in-patients and day cases—for the mental illness specialty was £122. This figure, which is provisional, is inclusive of treatment, accommodation and overhead costs.

Mentally Ill Offenders

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the Reed report about health services for mentally ill offenders.

Mr. Yeo: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 27 November 1992 at columns *873-74*. We have endorsed the main principles set out in the report of the Department of Health/Home Office review of services for mentally disordered offenders. The White Paper on "The Health of the Nation" requires health authorities to include these services in their strategic and purchasing plans. Capital funding for medium secure psychiatric services has been further increased from £17 million in 1992-93 to £22·4 million in 1993-94. We are still considering a number of the detailed recommendations in the report. We will be assisted by the new national advisory committee on mentally disordered offenders whose membership was recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Anaesthetics

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the annual savings achieved in the NHS sector by the prescribing of short-acting anaesthetics enabling patients requiring minor surgery to be treated at out-patient day clinics rather than being admitted to hospital.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has made no specific assessment. General anaesthesia is not routinely administered in out-patient clinics. Patients requiring minor surgery under general anaesthesia are normally admitted as day cases or as in-patients.

Mental Handicap

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the revenue cost per head from the Croydon health district area for mentally handicapped people in the very challenging category; and what were the previous costs in hospitals.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Adrienne Fresko, chairman of Croydon district health authority for details.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the appointments made by her as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in

paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Sackville: Ten of the appointments made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within these categories and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Medicines (Safety Tests)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which safety tests for potential new medicines are carried out on human cells in vitro rather than on animals.

Dr. Mawhinney: One type of safety testing that is appropriate for most new medicines involves assaying for mutagenic potential. The purpose of the test is to discover whether a substance may cause change in the genetic material which could be inherited by future generations of cells or individuals.

Three of the routine screening assays are performed in vitro with bacteria or mammalian, including human, cells as the target system. Specifically, human lymphocytes are used to ascertain whether the test substance is capable of producing chromosome breakage or other aberrations such as deletion of sections of chromosome. In second line testing, when confirmation of routine assay effects is required, procedures for measuring chromosome exchange and unscheduled DNA synthesis are employed. These may also use human cell lines in vitro to achieve their objective.

The safety of, for example, monoclonal antibody carriers of toxic cancer therapy agents can be tested by determining specificity of tissue affinity, using human material in vitro.

Carnegie Report

Mr. Ancram: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the forthcoming publication of the report of the Carnegie inquiry into the third age in relation to life, work and livelihood.

Mr. Yeo: The Department of Health has maintained close links with the Carnegie inquiry throughout the study and I am looking forward to studying the final report. We will be giving the fullest consideration to its findings and their implications for future policy.

The development of services for older people is one of the Government's priority areas. Spending on hospital and community health services in England used mainly by elderly people has increased during the life of the present Government by 41 per cent. in real terms and by about 40 per cent. in the personal social services.

Older people will be one of the groups who will benefit most from the changes to the health service and from the community care reforms. The reforms will mean better assessment of individual needs and better targeted care. The special needs of older people and their carers will now be fully reflected in the planning and purchasing of services.

The Department also has co-ordinating responsibility within the United Kingdom for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations. A seminar on the implications of the Carnegie inquiry will form part of the core programme of events organised to mark the year. We are also promoting many initiatives as part of the year which closely reflect recommendations made in the Carnegie report. Work on the European year involves extensive liaison across Government Departments and with a wide range of voluntary, statutory and professional bodies.

We have made widely available the Department's publication, "Health and Healthy Living: A Guide for Older People", and have taken a number of steps to promote activities which help to keep older people free of sickness and disability. All the key areas in the White Paper "The Health of the Nation" are relevant to older people and we are looking at ways to take this work forward with special reference to the needs of the older age groups.

Dentists

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has as to the frequency with which people over the age of 65 years visit a dentist, and as to the factors which influence this frequency.

Dr. Mawhinney: The evidence held indicates that there is no set pattern of dental attendance among those over age 65 and that the factors which influence the frequency of their attendance are varied.

Hospital Charges

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to which other EC countries have *(a)* no hospital charges per day for any in-patient and *(b)* no charges for being seen by a general practitioner.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the state health care sector, hospital in-patient services are provided without daily charges being levied in Denmark, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Free general practitioner consultations are available in Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Spain and for almost all the population in Denmark. Details are in leaflet T4 "Health Advice for Travellers" available in post offices and the Library.

Brain Cancer

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she funds into possible links between pesticides commonly used in household sprays and childhood brain cancer; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None. The main body through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which is funded by the Office of Science and Technology.

We are not aware of any research into this issue in the United Kingdom. Before any pesticide is approved for use it must be approved by Ministers who will have consulted the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, a statutory body of independent experts.

The recently published study in America which is reported as suggesting an association between childhood brain cancer and pesticide usage will be considered by the Department's professional staff and if necessary the expert advisory committees.

Community Care

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will meet the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss their criticisms of the

Department's guidelines in regard to assessing the community care needs of elderly disabled people and people who are mentally ill and the association's urgent call for more precise guidance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I met the Association of Directors of Social Services last month, as did the chief inspector of the Department's social services inspectorate. On neither occasion was the need for an urgent meeting on this guidance raised.

Helicopter Ambulance

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in each of the last four years the helicopter ambulance has landed on school premises in the Greater London area; and if she will list which schools.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Martin Gorham, chief executive of the London ambulance service, for details.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many emergency calls have been received by the helicopter ambulance service in London in each of the past four years; on how many occasions a patient has been air-lifted to hospital; and if she will list which hospitals.

Mr Sackville: In the period April 1991 to April 1992, 331 calls were answered by the helicopter emergency medical service. No other information is available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr Martin Gorham, chief executive of the London ambulance service, for further details.

Fuel Oil Duty

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate she has made of the additional costs faced by the national health service resulting from the increase of fuel oil duty announced in the Budget; and if she will make it her policy to ensure that patient care is not diminished through the budget reductions necessary to meet the increased costs.

(2) what is the expected cost to Staffordshire ambulance trust of the increased duty announced in the Budget on petrol and diesel fuel; and whether she expects the costs to be passed on to its client health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: The effect of the increased fuel duty is expected to add less than 0·05 per cent. to health service costs, depending on other developments in the fuel market. Indeed, since the budget one petrol company has reduced its prices by 9p a gallon. Authorities are expected to manage cost pressures within existing resource allocations and obtain best value for money through current management processes.

The estimated increased cost for the Staffordshire ambulance trust is £6,000. The trust will not increase prices to purchasers.

Perinatal Deaths

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the report commissioned by Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority into perinatal deaths by Professor Barker.

Mr. Sackville: The report referred to is a local report commissioned by Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority and North Western regional health authority, and is not yet complete. Publication will be a matter for the DHA.

Hospices

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was allocated by her Department to each region for the funding of hospices in 1992-93; and how much money was allocated in 1992-93 by regional health authorities to hospices.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1990-91, the Government have allocated funds annually to regional health authorities in England specifically to increase the support they give to voluntary hospices. In 1992-93 £31·7 million was made available for hospice funding. Additionally, since 1991-92, funds have been provided to ensure the supply of drugs to hospices without charge. The allocation for 1992-93 was £5·5 million. The combined allocation to each region was:

Region	*Amount £000*
Northern	2,329
Yorkshire	2,892
Trent	3,443
East Anglian	1,589
North West Thames	2,469
North East Thames	2,807
South East Thames	3,233
South West Thames	2,473
Wessex	2,513
Oxford	1,737
South Western	2,835
West Midlands	3,828
Mersey	1,940
North Western	3,105

Information on how much individual regions make available to hospices is not available centrally.

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what actions have been taken by her Department to monitor asthma levels among children in London; what further research is planned; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not routinely collected. In 1992 the Department set up a Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants under the chairmanship of Professor Stephen Holgate. The committee has recently set up a sub-group on asthma and air pollution to look at asthma trends and geographical variations, to consider what effect air pollutants might be having on asthma rates and to recommend research objectives.

Drug or Alcohol Dependency

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she intends to issue new guidance regarding ordinary residence with respect to potential users of drug or alcohol dependency services.

Mr. Yeo: Guidance on ordinary residence for people requiring social services, which includes this client group, was issued this week. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a list of comparable costs of providing a residential place in *(a)* a residential unit for drug dependency, *(b)* a rehabilitation unit for alcohol dependency and *(c)* a local prison.

Mr. Yeo: The standing conference on drug abuse produces a guide for services for drug and alcohol rehabilitation and has indicated that the costs of residential rehabilitation care range from £280 to over £1,000 per person per week depending on the locality and the type and level of care provided.

I understand from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department that the cost for a place in local prisons and adult remand centres is £437 per week and for the generality of all prisons £442 per week.

NHS Management

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give, in real terms, the salary cost of all grades of management/administrators employed within the national health service in each year since 1980, and also give this figure as an annual percentage using 1980 as the base.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* Information on hospital and community health services in England is shown in the table. Those for 1991-92 are provisional.

The administrative and clerical pay group covers a wide variety of staff including senior ambulance officers, some departmental managers, ward clerks, medical secretaries and medical records staff in addition to clerical and secretarial staff. Many A and C staff are employed to support clinicians and others concerned with the direct provision of patient services.

General and senior managers comprise a separate pay category which was not established until 1986. Its adoption throughout the national health service occurred over a period of some years and its numbers include many employees re-classified from other pay groups including senior nursing staff.

HCHS – Salaries and wages costs

	Administrative and clerical staff			*General and senior managers*				
	£ thousand (cash)	*£ thousand at 1992-93 prices*	*Real terms percentage change on 1980-81*	*£ thousand (cash)*	*£ thousand at 1992-93 prices*	*Total*	*£ thousand at 1992-93 prices*	*Real terms percentage change on 1980-81*
1980-81	603,565	1,220,227	0	0	0	603,565	1,220,227	0
1981-82	662,774	1,221,897	0·14	0	0	662,774	1,221,897	0·14
1982-83	677,736	1,166,431	−4·41	0	0	677,736	1,166,431	−4·41
1983-84	709,885	1,167,697	−4·30	0	0	709,885	1,167,697	−4·30
1984-85	760,058	1,189,901	−2·49	0	0	760,058	1,189,901	−2·49
1985-86	761,615	1,130,610	−7·34	10,951	16,257	772,566	1,146,867	−6·01
1986-87	815,269	1,172,504	−3·91	25,677	36,928	840,946	1,209,432	−0·88
1987-88	885,145	1,206,630	−1·11	29,647	40,415	914,792	1,247,044	2·20
1988-89	979,254	1,244,328	1·98	30,513	38,773	1,009,767	1,283,101	5·15
1989-90	1,038,857	1,238,453	1·49	158,844	189,399	1,197,501	1,427,852	17·02
1990-91	1,187,029	1,310,397	7·39	251,475	277,611	1,438,504	1,588,008	30·14
1991-92	1,382,756	1,431,155	17·29	383,380	396,798	1,766,138	1,827,953	49·80

Notes:

1. HCHS covers the total expenditure by the health authorities (and the NHS Trusts) including hospital, community health, patient transport (ie ambulance), blood transfusion and other services.
2. The figures are the gross pay costs of directly employed staff including employers' National Insurance and superannuation contributions.
3. The figures have been expressed at 1992-93 prices by the use of Gross Domestic Product deflators.
4. The table excludes salaries and wages costs incurred by family health services authorities and special health authorities providing central services to the NHS. However, the figures for administrative and clerical staff for the years prior to 1985-86 cover those staff employed by family practitioners committees whose costs were included with those of area health authorities and were not separately identified.

Source: Annual accounts (1982-83 to 1990-91) and annual financial returns (1991-92) of regional and district health authorities in England and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. Annual accounts of area health and other predecessor authorities (1980-81 and 1981-82). Annual financial returns of the first wave NHS Trusts (1991-92).

Deaths

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish a table showing for each year from 1979 *(a)* the number of deaths that were expected annually in each health region and *(b)* the number of actual deaths that occurred in each health region using (i) England as standard, (ii) Wessex region as standard and (iii) northern region as standard;

(2) if she will publish a table showing for each year from 1979 *(a)* the number of deaths of those under 75 years that were expected annually in each health region and *(b)* the number of actual deaths of those under 75 years that occurred in each health region using (i) England as standard, (ii) Wessex region as standard and (iii) northern region as standard.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 22 March 1993]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. Expected numbers of deaths were calculated using popu'ation estimates for 1979-90, based on the 1981 census, and on the provisional estimates for 1991, based on the 1991 census.

North East Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of public money per head of the population was spent in each of the districts of the North East Thames regional health authority in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The information on revenue expenditure per head of population is shown in the table.

The district health authorities' figures for 1991-92 are not comparable with those for earlier years as they show the authorities primarily as purchasers rather than providers of health care. The figures for DHAs will vary reflecting a transitional position as the North East Thames regional health authority moves towards allocating funds to DHAs on a weighted capitation basis. Figures for total spending per capita include other resources, such as regional budgets and local income, in addition to allocations for resident population.

Revenue expenditure per head of population—North East Thames district health authorities—£(cash)

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Basildon & Thurrock	185	210	230	245	307
Mid Essex	199	219	237	255	319
North East Essex	202	220	236	247	337
West Essex	175	200	222	239	326
Southend	161	180	199	219	279
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	189	207	220	237	343
Hampstead	592	688	729	799	576
City and Hackney	483	543	574	612	572
Newham	227	253	273	299	460
Tower Hamlets	485	542	588	613	487
Enfield	166	187	200	214	368
Haringey	270	293	337	363	449
Redbridge	193	219	235	245	384
Waltham Forest	288	328	359	390	448
Bloomsbury and Islington	655	738	791	818	736

Sources:
(a) Annual accounts of district health authorities (and predecessor authorites in the case of Bloomsbury and Islington)—1987-88 to 1991-92.
(b) Mid-year estimates of resident population—1987 to 1991 (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys).
Notes:
1. The figures for the DHAs are based upon their total revenue expenditure on the services which they managed or accounted for in the relevant financial years. Those for 1991-92 cover their total revenue expenditure including that on purchases of health care and directly related services, administrative and purchasing functions and other expenditure.
2. Capital expenditure incurred by the DHAs and all expenditure incurred by the North East Thames Regional Health Authority is excluded. Expenditure on family health services, which is accounted for by Family Health Services Authorities and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts, is similarly excluded.
3. The population figures used make no allowance for residents of particular districts who receive treatment in others. The figures used for mid 1991 are provisional and based on the 1991 census.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxpayers

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *690*, on the number of taxpayers, giving estimates for 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are given in the table. The figures for 1992-93 have been revised in line with more recent information. Taxpayers are classified as lower rate, basic rate or higher rate by comparing their taxable income with the lower rate and basic rate limits. Taxable income is defined as gross income less those allowances and reliefs which are available at taxpayers' marginal rates. In the earlier answer mortgage interest relief at source was deducted from taxable income in classifying taxpayers as basic or lower rate. However, as MIRAS is given at a single rate, and does not affect the taxpayer's marginal rate, it is more helpful for this purpose to disregard it. The effect of the definition now adopted is to reduce slightly the estimated number of lower rate taxpayers.

Thousands

	Male				*Female*				*All tax payers*
	Single		*Married*		*Single*		*Married*		
	aged under 65	*aged 65 and over*	*aged under 65*	*aged 65 and over*	*aged under 65*	*aged 65 and over*	*aged under 65*	*aged 65 and over*	
1992-93 taxpayers									
Lower rate taxpayers	660	200	300	310	730	370	1,100	70	3,900
Basic rate taxpayers	4,200	260	6,800	650	2,700	500	3,800	260	19,200
Higher rate taxpayers	240	20	1,100	60	90	30	100	20	1,600
All taxpayers	5,100	480	8,200	1,000	3,600	910	4,900	550	24,700
1993-94 taxpayers									
Lower rate taxpayers	830	240	440	380	870	460	1,300	320	4,900
Basic rate taxpayers	4,000	230	6,500	580	2,600	440	3,400	230	18,000
Higher rate taxpayers	250	20	1,100	60	90	30	90	20	1,600
All taxpayers	5,100	490	8,100	1,000	3,500	920	4,800	560	24,500

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the information given in tables 5.6 and 5.8 of the autumn statement 1992 on the basis of changes announced in the Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: The table updates the information contained in table 5.6 of the Autumn Statement and shows the cost/yield in 1993-94 of illustrative tax changes implemented at the start of the year (receipts basis) and the corresponding cost/yield once the full effect of the changes come through (the full year basis) after taking into account the tax changes proposed in the Budget. Detailed information for the effect of the complete range of ready reckoner changes in 1994-95 is not yet available but will be published in "Inland Revenue Statistics" during the summer.

The estimates of the direct effects of illustrative changes in indirect taxes given in table 5.8 are broadly unchanged.

Table 6
Direct effects of illustrative changes in direct taxes[1]

Income tax[2]	*£ million cost/yeild Receipts*	*1993-94 Full year*
Rates		
Change lower rate by 1p	320	380
Change basic rate by 1p	1,300	1,500
Change higher rate by 1p	190	330
Allowances		
Change personal allowance by £100	450	550
Change age-related personal allowances by £100[3]	40	55
Change married couple's allowance by £100[4]	180	230
Change age-related married couple's allowances by £100[3]	14	18
Change aged income limit by £500	6	10
Change all main allowances by 1 per cent.[5]	210	260
Change all main allowances by 10 per cent.:[5]		
increase (cost)	2,050	2,575
decrease (yield)	2,150	2,675
Lower rate band		
Increase lower rate band by 10 per cent.[5]	190	240
Basic rate limit		
Change basic rate limit by 1 per cent.[5]	40	60
Change basic rate limit by 10 per cent.:[5]		
increase (cost)	360	530
decrease (yield)	470	670
Allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit		
Change all main allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit by 1 per cent.[5]	270	340
Change all main allowances, lower rate band and basic rate limit by 10 per cent.:[5]		
increase (cost)	2,575	3,300
decrease (yield)	2,850	3,650
Corporation tax[6]		
Change full rate by 1 percentage point	330	460
Change small companies' rate by 1 percentage point[7]	65	100
Capital gains tax[8]		
Change annual exempt amount by £500 for individuals and £250 for trusts	0	11
Inheritance tax[8]		
Change rate by 1 percentage point	11	34
Increase threshold by £5,000	12	36

[1] The estimated revenue effects of changes on receipts are rounded. The extent of rounding reflects the desire to avoid undue compounding of its effects when numbers are pro-rated, rather then the accuracy of the estiamtes.

[2] The figures for income tax changes include consequential effects on the yield of capital gains tax. Changes are assumed to take effect from April 1993.

[3] Allowances for those aged 65 to 74 and aged 75 and over.

[4] Figures include revenue effects of changing additional personal allowance and widow's bereavement allowance by £100.

[5] Percentage changes are calculated with reference to 1993-94 levels.

[6] Assessment to corporation tax normally relates to the preceding year. These estimates are the changes to revenue that would occur if the changed rates were applied to profits from 1 April 1992.

[7] These figures ignore effects arising from the imputation system.

[8] These changes are assumed to take effect from April 1993.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *688*, on the number of taxpayers who pay tax at the rate of 20 per cent. only, giving estimates for 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1993-94 indicate that about 4·9 million taxpayers will pay tax only at the lowest rate of 20 per cent. Their average gross income will be about £5,300 and average taxable income (defined as gross income less those allowances and reliefs which are available at the taxpayer"s marginal rate) will be £1,200.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1993-94 the number of people with *(a)* taxable income and *(b)* other income who have no tax liability, giving figures separately for (i) families with children, (ii) childless couples, (iii) single people and (iv) pensioners and non-pensioners.

Mr. Dorell: The estimated numbers of taxpayers and non-taxpayers for 1993-94 are shown in the table. The estimates in the first table are based on a projection of the 1990-91 Survey of Personal Incomes and estimates of the total population. Information on types of family is derived from a number of sources including the 1991 Family Expenditure Survey and the estimates are approximate.

(millions)

	Taxpayers	*Non-taxpayers*
People aged 65 or over	3·0	6·2
People aged over 16 but less than 65	21·5	15·4

(millions)

	Families with children[1]	*Childless couples*	*Single people without children*
Two taxpayers	2·0	3·1	—
One taxpayer	2·9	1·9	9·6
No taxpayers	2·2	2·5	8·8

[1] Includes 1·4 million lone parents.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures estimating the number of taxpayers in 1993-94 with *(a)* gross and *(b)* taxable incomes in the following income ranges: (i) under £5,000, (ii) £5,000 to £10,000, (iii) £10,000 to £15,000, (iv) £15,000 to £20,000 (v) £20,000 to £25,000 (vi) £25,000 to £30,000, (vii) £30,000 to £40,000, (viii) £40,000 to £50,000, (ix) £50,000 to to £70,000, (x) £70,000 to £80,000 and (xi) over £80,000.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates are given in the table:

Thousands

	Number of taxpayers by range of [1]*Gross income*	[2]*Taxable income*
Under £5,000	2,200	9,100
£5,000 to £10,000	7,600	6,600
£10,000 to £15,000	6,100	4,000
£15,000 to £20,000	3,700	2,300
£20,000 to £25,000	2,200	1,000
£25,000 to £30,000	1,100	490
£30,000 to £40,000	860	470
£40,000 to £50,000	320	200
£50,000 to £70,000	230	150
£70,000 to £80,000	50	30
over £80,000	140	110
Total taxpayers	24,500	24,500

[1]Gross income is defined as total income for income tax purposes. It excludes income from certain social security benefits and some investment income such as National Savings Certificates.

[2]Taxable income is defined as gross for income tax purposes less those allowances and reliefs which are available at the taxpayer's marginal rate.

Value Added Tax

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to which items a zero rate for value added tax has been extended since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Under the terms of the EC Sixth VAT Directive, agreed on 17 May 1977, items which are standard rated for VAT cannot generally be moved to the zero rate. But permissible minor changes which have slightly extended the scope of the reliefs have been made in a number of areas, including reliefs for aids for the handicapped, supplies to and by charities and most recently for certain protective boots and helmets and motor-cycle crash helmets meeting EC standards. A comprehensive list of all such minor changes going back to 1979 could be made only at disproportionate cost.

Domestic Fuel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of their budget is spent on fuel by *(a)* the poorest decile and *(b)* the richest decile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: According to the Family Expenditure Survey, over the period 1989 to 1991, expenditure on fuel, light and power accounted for 10¼ per cent. of total expenditure for the bottom decile and 3¼ per cent. of total spending for the top decile.

Civil Servants (Salaries)

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money in interest the Government gained by withholding the salaries of 63,000 civil servants for three days in February 1993.

Sir John Cope: The Exchequer benefit from the late payment in error of the salaries of some civil servants in the Department of Employment Group at the end of February was approximately £25,000.

Credit Institutions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the publicly-owned credit institutions in each EEC member state specified in the proposed article 104(2) in the Maastricht treaty to which prohibition in article 104(1) of overdraft and credit facilities to central and local governments does not apply.

Mr. Nelson: It would not be possible to provide this list without disproportionate expense. The provision in article 104(2) would enable national central banks and the European central bank to treat publicly-owned credit institutions, in the same way as private credit institutions, in the context of the supply of reserves by central banks. In the absence of this provision, the prohibitions in article 104(1) would prevent the European central bank or national central banks from dealing with publicly-owned credit institutions in normal money market operations, which often involve, for example, the purchase by central banks of short term instruments.

Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how ways and means advances from the Bank of England to Governments operate; and what proposals he has for monetising rather than funding any proportion of the public sector borrowing requirement by means of such advances.

Mr. Nelson: The daily flows of cash between the Consolidated Fund and the National Loans Fund may result in either a surplus or a deficit on the National Loans Fund. Where there is a deficit, that deficit is met by ways and means advances from the Bank of England.

The Government have no intention of monetising rather than funding any proportion of the public sector borrowing requirement by means of such advances.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the prohibition of overdraft facilities with the Bank of England in the proposed article 104 in the Maastricht treaty is proposed to come into effect.

Mr. Nelson: Article 104 would come into effect on 1 January 1994. Under paragraph 11 of the protocol on "Certain Provisions relating to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland", the United Kingdom may maintain its ways and means facility with the Bank of England if, and so long as, the United Kingdom does not move to the third stage of economic and monetary union.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recourse he has had to ways and means advances from the Bank of England in each year since 1979; and for what amounts.

Mr. Nelson: The level of ways and means advances outstanding fluctuates from day to day. The ways and means advances outstanding on the last working day of each financial year, which includes ways and means advances from the Bank of England, is published in the supplementary statements to the Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund accounts for that year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what interest rate is payable on ways and means advances from the Bank of England to *(a)* central Government, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* nationalised industries.

Mr. Nelson: The interest rate payable on ways and means advances to central Government is the band 1 eligible Bill rate. The Bank of England has no ways and means arrangement with either local authorities or nationalised industries.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals for the Bank of England's report of its supervisory functions under the Banking Act 1987 to include details of support operations to authorised banking institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Section 1(3) of the Banking Act 1987 requires the Bank to make an annual report on its activities under the Act. I have no intention of varying these requirements. It is for the Bank of England to decide whether to include in the Banking Act report matters other than its activities under the Act.

European Monetary Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which provisions of stage II of European monetary union apply to the United Kingdom before notice is given under article 1 of the protocol of the Maastricht treaty relating to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: All the stage 2 provisions of the Maastricht treaty will apply to the United Kingdom except that, by virtue of paragraph 11 of the United Kingdom protocol, our ways and means facility with the Bank of England can be maintained if and so long as the United Kingdom does not move to the third stage.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reasons it was considered desirable for the United Kingdom, to retain the ways and means facility, according to paragraph 11 of the Maastricht protocol on provisions relating to the United Kingdom, under stage II of European monetary union.

Mr. Nelson: The Government saw no reason to change our existing ways and means arrangements during stage 2 to meet the intention of article 104 in prohibiting monetary financing.

European Central Bank

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what negotiations his Department has had with European officials over the possible siting of the headquarters of a European central bank in London.

Mr. Nelson: The site of the European central bank has been discussed on a number of occasions and my Department continues to press the strong market case for locating the new European monetary institutions in London.

Mergers and Divisions (Taxation)

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many EC countries have failed to implement the directive on a common system of taxation of mergers and divisions of parents and subsidiary companies in EC countries.

Mr. Dorrell: The Commission of the European Communities is responsible for ensuring that member states comply with their obligations to implement Community legislation. Provisions implementing the directives on cross-border mergers and on parent and subsidiary companies in the United Kingdom were included in the Finance (No. 2) Act 1992.

General Government Expenditure

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table breaking down the series in line 1, general Government expenditure, of table 2C.2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1993-94" into its principal components.

Mr. Portillo: Table 1.2 of the 1993-94 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" (FSBR) sets out a comparison of the current estimates of the components of spending for 1992-93 with the equivalent forecasts from the 1992-93 Report. Projections for general Government expenditure in the FSBR are consistent with the plans for public expenditure announced in the Autumn Statement. Details of the differences from previous plans for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are set out in section 7 of the Statistical Supplement to the 1992 Autumn Statement (Cm 2219). Similar comparisons for 1995-96 and 1996-97 are not practical, because the projections in table 2A.3 of the 1992-93 edition of the FSBR were compiled on the basis of the planning total, rather than the new control total.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to exempt the value of invalidity benefit available to the sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis from taxation.

Mr. Dorrell: Invalidity benefit is not currently subject to taxation.

World Economy

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out a table indicating the effect of the changes to the world economy variables in table 3.2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1993-94" relative to the equivalent table in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1992-93" on his Department's estimates of the public sector borrowing requirement in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* Estimates of their separate effect are not available.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

London Marathon

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what agreement his Department has now reached with the organisers of the London marathon over proposed charges for their use of the royal parks for the event.

Mr. Key: The London marathon has agreed to pay the fee of £15,000 for the use of the royal parks.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Brooke: I am responsible for appointments to the following bodies identified in "Public Bodies 1992":

Arts Council of Great Britain.
British Film Institute.
British Library.
British Tourist Authority.
Broadcasting Complaints Commission.
Broadcasting Standards Council.
Crafts Council.
English Tourist Board.
Football Licensing Authority.
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage).
National Film and Television School.
National Film Development Fund.
Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites.
Advisory Committee on the Government Art Collection.
Library and Information Services Council.
Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation.
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art.
Theatres Trust.
Independent Television Commission.
Radio Authority.
Welsh Fourth Channel Authority.
Registrar of Public Lending Right.
South Bank Theatre Board.
Sports Council.

Of the bodies listed below, the procedures set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of Questions of Procedure for Ministers would apply to:

Arts Council of Great Britain.
British Library.
British Tourist Authority.
Broadcasting Complaints Commission.
Broadcasting Standards Council.
Crafts Council.
English Tourist Board.
Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage).
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art.
Independent Television Commission.
Radio Authority.
Welsh Fourth Channel Authority.
Sports Council.

Royal Parks

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress his Department has made in privatising the management of the royal parks in London.

Mr. Key: The management of the royal parks is not being privatised. As my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 1 April, the Royal Parks Agency was established on that day with delegated responsibility for the day-to-day management of the royal parks. The agency's chief executive will remain accountable to my right hon. Friend for the agency's performance.

Welsh Language Broadcasting

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment his Department has made of the potential audience for S4C, in respect of the numbers of Welsh speakers, especially with relation to those with modest knowledge of, or understanding of the Welsh language in relation to the level of public subsidy for the channel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that 67 per cent. of the population in Wales, and up to 90 per cent. of all Welsh speakers in Wales, watch S4C programmes each week.

National Lottery

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what powers he intends to give to the director general of the national lottery to determine the levels of profit and administrative costs for the body corporate licensed by him to run the national lottery or for those bodies corporate licensed by him to promote lotteries as part of the national lottery;

(2) what powers he plans to give to the director general of the national lottery to determine the extent to which radio and television advertising is used to promote the national lottery;

(3) what control the director general of the national lottery will have over the contracting out of work to other bodies corporate by the body corporate licensed by him to run the national lottery and by the bodies corporate licensed by him to promote lotteries as part of the national lottery;

(4) if the applications made to the director general of the national lottery by bodies corporate to run the national lottery, or by bodies corporate to promote lotteries as part of the national lottery, will be required to detail any proposed contracting out of work to other bodies corporate;

(5) if the licence authorised by the director general of the national lottery to a body corporate to run the national lottery, or to bodies corporate to promote lotteries as part of the national lottery, will include authorisation for those bodies corporate to contract out work to other bodies corporate;

(6) what control the director general of the national lottery will have over the contracting out of work to other bodies corporate by the body corporate licensed by him to run the national lottery and by the bodies corporate licensed by him to promote lotteries as part of the national lottery;

(7) if work contracted out to other bodies corporate by the body corporate licensed by the director general of the national lottery to run the national lottery, or by those bodies corporate licensed by him to promote lotteries as part of the national lottery, will be on the basis of competitive tender.

Mr. Key: The powers of the director general are set out in the National Lottery etc. Bill. In considering whether to grant a licence under clause 5 the director general will no doubt take into account a number of matters, which might

include the levels of profit and administrative costs of those bidding; these may then be reflected in licence conditions. Whether or not to contract out work would be an operational matter for the body which was awarded the clause 5 licence. It would be subject to normal commercial tendering arrangements. However that body could not contract out the running of games unless they were regulated under a clause 6 licence. In addition, the director general could, through the clause 5 licence, ensure that any sub-contracts included conditions to enable him to carry out effectively his statutory duties under clause 4. Advertising would be a matter for the operator, and would be subject to the constraints of the ITC and Radio Authority codes; however, in assessing the merits of particular bids the director general would no doubt take into account the effectiveness of the proposed marketing strategy.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what powers he intends to give the director general of the national lottery to determine places of sale for national lottery tickets.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has powers under clause 12 of the National Lottery etc. Bill to regulate the places where lottery tickets can be sold. The director general may, among other things, consider the retail strategy of applicants for a licence under clause 5.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what powers he plans to give to the director general of the national lottery to decide on the frequency of national lottery games;

(2) what powers he plans to give the director general of the national lottery to determine the size of the prize offered by the national lottery;

(3) what powers he plans to give to the director general of the national lottery to determine the extent to which the national lottery is allowed to roll over prizes.

Mr. Key: In consideration whether to grant any licence under clause 6, the director general will examine the rules of proposed games and will be able to take into account matters such as the prize structure, odds (and therefore the likelihood of rollover), and the frequency of competitions. In addition, my right hon. Friend is minded to direct the director general to use his powers to limit rollover to no more than three consecutive games.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the "Treasury Private Finance Guidance" published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* My Department is examining the scope for involving the private sector in the ways suggested by the interim guidance published by the Treasury on 9 December 1992, and the further published guidance on contract energy management (17 February 1993) and joint ventures (16 March 1993).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit the Korean peninsula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will visit the Republic of Korea from 7 to 9 April. This will be a good opportunity for wide-ranging talks with members of the new Administration there and with business representatives.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of recent changes in the human rights situation in the Republic of Korea; and if he will make a statement on the recent amnesty granted by the Government there.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Together with our European Community partners, we continue to monitor developments over human rights in the Republic of Korea. We are very encouraged by progress in the democratic process, most recently demonstrated by the presidential election. We regard the recent amnesty for prisoners as further evidence of the Government's desire to establish a broader base of popular trust within the country.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether each American nuclear base installed in South Korea has been examined and cleared by the International Atomic Energy Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: South Korea acceded to the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state in 1975 and has in place a full scope safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. No reports of non-compliance have been received.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the resolution approved by the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency on 18 March on the attempts to implement the request for nuclear safeguards inspections in North Korea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A copy has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Somalia

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current waiting time for Somali refugees who are awaiting entry certificates to join dependants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Most Somali refugee applications for entry clearance to join dependants are received at Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Djibouti/Sana'a. Where Home Office authority has been pre-advised to post, in accordance with the concessions agreed by Ministers in 1988, visas are issued on the day of application. All other applicants are interviewed by an entry clearance officer and their applications referred to the Home Office. Applicants at Nairobi are usually interviewed within seven days. The waiting time for interview at Addis Ababa is currently

about six weeks. There are no visa issuing staff at Djibouti. Entry clearance officers from Sana'a visit Djibouti every two months to carry out interviews. The Home Office decision on applications can take between three weeks and six months depending on the complexity of individual cases.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the way applications for entry certificates by citizens of Somalia are dealt with at the British high commission, Nairobi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Entry clearance procedures at all posts overseas are constantly monitored. Applications for entry clearance by citizens of Somalia are processed at the British high commission, Nairobi, in accordance with the operating standards established by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for all overseas posts. Somali applicants for transit visas are interviewed on the day of application and, if appropriate, visas issued on the same day. Somalis who wish to join relatives in the United Kingdom for settlement are granted interviews usually within seven days from submitting their applications and details are then sent to the Home Office for decision, a process which usually takes between 10 and 25 days.

Nuclear Testing

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what costs have been incurred by the British embassy in Washington DC in the last year in the process of lobbying the United States Congress on the question of nuclear testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Lobbying congressmen on a wide range of issues is a routine activity for the embassy in Washington. It is not practical to extrapolate with precision the costs of lobbying Congress on this specific issue from those of the overall activities of the embassy. But within the context of the embassy's work the time taken to do so was minimal, and the costs are likely to have been similarly minimal.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions the United Kingdom representative at the United Nations has taken to ensure that a referendum is held on the future of the Western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 809, the United Kingdom permanent representative has been in touch with the United Nations Secretary-General to offer our support and to encourage him to redouble his efforts with both parties to bring about a referendum by the end of the year. The Secretary-General's special representative, Yaqub Khan, is currently visiting the region.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries which have signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A list of states party to the non-proliferation treaty has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Iran

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Italy with regard to joint efforts to combat terrorism emanating from Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our European partners made clear at the Edinburgh summit in December our concern at Iranian behaviour in a number of areas, particularly the fatwa against Salman Rushdie and terrorism. We maintain regular contact with our European partners including the Italians, on ways of combatting terrorism.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The information is as follows:

Council of Ministers business for April 1993

1. The following meetings are planned:
   - 5 April: Foreign Affairs Council
   - 5 April: Internal Market Council
   - 6 April: Employment and Social Affairs Council
   - 19 April: ECOFIN Council
   - 23 April: Energy/Environment Council
   - 26-27 April: Agriculture Council
   - 29 April: Research Council
2. The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

(a) Foreign Affairs Council—5 April

- Commission opinion on Norway and preparation of opening negotiating session
- Relations with Russia
- Relations with Slovenia
- Ex-Yugoslavia
- Trade Policy questions

(b) Internal Market Council—5 April

- Duration of Copyright (5509/92)
- Cable and Satellite broadcasting copyright (8331/91)
- CE Mark regulation (6827/91)
- Directive on braking of two or three wheeled motor vehicles (4946/92)
- Directive amending Directive 89/392/EEC on machinery
- Directive on Statutory Markings for two or three wheeled motor vehicles (5331/91)
- Additional measures concerning the official control of foodstuffs (4690/92)
- Directive on sweeteners for use in foodstuffs (7726/92)
- Public supply contracts (8746/92)

(c) Labour and Social Affairs Council—6 April

- Biological agents Directive (8075/92; 5058/93)
- Working time Directive (590/91; 8145/92)
- Fishing Vessels Directive (9482/91; 8731/92)
- Protection of Young Workers Directive (5378/92; 4690/92)
- European Works Councils Directive (4466/91; 8319/91)
- Employment (open session)

(d) ECOFIN Council: 19 April—(provisional agenda)

- Economic recovery in Europe
- Interinstitutional Agreement on budget discipline
- Euratom loans to improve the degree of efficiency and safety of nuclear power stations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (possible)
- Community guarantee to the EIB against losses under loans for projects in Albania (possible)
- 7th VAT Directive
- Proposal for a Council Directive on deposit-guarantee schemes
- Company taxation (possible)

(e) Energy/Environment Council—23 April

Community Strategy on Climate change (including CO_2/Energy tax) (7018/92)

(f) Agriculture Council—26/27 April

Price-fixing proposals (COM(93)36)
Milk Quotas (5466/93)
GATT Agriculture
Sugar (4632/93; 5278/93)
Greek Tobacco (5018/93) (possible)
Potatoes (10483/93; 4613/93) (possible)

(g) Research Council—29 April

Agenda unavailable

3. The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 5-6 April. EC Foreign Ministers will consider a revised negotiating mandate for partnership and co-operation agreements with the States of the former Soviet Union. Ministers will also consider a negotiating mandate for new Europe Agreements with the successor Czech and Slovak Republics, as the Europe agreement signed with Czechoslovakia in December 1991 was not ratified prior to the country's dissolution at the beginning of 1993. Ministers will agree to open accession negotiations with Norway.

4. The *Internal Market Council* will meet on 5 April and will discuss statutory markings and braking for two and three wheeled vehicles; CE mark regulation; cable and satellite broadcasting copyright and duration of copyright. Ministers will also discuss directives on the official control of foodstuffs and sweeteners for use in foodstuffs. Public supply contracts and the final adoption of the directive on machinery will also be discussed.

5. A formal meeting of the *Labour and Social Affairs Council* is planned for 6 April. The agenda has not been finalised, but the directives on biological agents, working time, and fishing vessels are likely to be discussed. A policy debate will also be held on the directives on protection of young workers and European Works Council. There is likely to be an open session on employment.

6. The *Economic and Finance Council* will meet on 19 April to discuss action to promote recovery in Europe resulting from the initiative launched by the Edinburgh European Council. It will also discusss the negotiations between the Council, the Presidency and European Parliament on a new inter-institutional agreement on budget discipline. The Council may also discuss a draft directive on company taxation concerning interest/royalties. The proposal to amend the 7th VAT Directive (Special VAT regime for second-hand goods, works of art, antique and collectors' items) is also scheduled for further discussion. It is possible, but unlikely, that there will also be discussions of EURATOM loans for nuclear safety in central and eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, EIB loans for projects in Albania, and the proposed Council directive on deposit-guarantee schemes.

7. A joint *Energy/Environment Council* will be held on 23 April. The Council will discuss the Community's strategy on climate change, including the proposals for a tax on carbon dioxide emissions and energy.

8. The *Agriculture Council* will meet on 26 and 27 April. Ministers will discuss the 1993-94 price-fixing proposals; milk quotas; the agricultural aspects of the GATT negotiations and sugar. They may also discuss Greek tobacoo and the review of the potato regime.

9. The *Research Council* will meet on 29 April. At present, the agenda is not available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Act

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the impact of the European charter on the rights of the child upon the provision within the Child Support Act 1991 to name the father of the child in question; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The European charter to which the hon. Member refers was discussed in the European Parliament on 6 and 8 July 1992, when it was forwarded to the Commission, the Council and the Council of Europe. A European Parliament resolution is not binding on the member states. The provisions of the Child Support Act 1991 meet the standards set out in the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to monitor the effect of the Child Support Act 1991 on ethnic minorities.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act will apply in all cases where child maintenance is an issue. It will ensure that parents meet their responsibilities to their children whenever they can afford to do so and that the costs of maintaining those children does not unnecessarily fall to the taxpayer. No distinction will, or should, be made on grounds of ethnic origin.

Disabilitiy (Grants) Bill

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received from the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People in regard to the Disability (Grants) Bill; and what response he has made.

Mr. Scott: The Secretary of State received a letter on this subject from the Council at the beginning of February. The letter was also copied to the Prime Minister, and a reply was sent from his office.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People in regard to the Disability (Grants) Bill and the £500 limit on help to enable disabled people to live independently in the community; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Secretary of State received a letter on this subject from the Council at the beginning of February. The letter was also copied to the Prime Minister, and a reply was sent from his office.

Young People, Scotland

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications were made by 16 to 17-year-old persons for income support due to severe hardship in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each of the past three years; and of these how many were successful in (i) Inverclyde, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Ann Robinson to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 1 April 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard

is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many applications were made by 16 to 17 year old persons for Income Support due to severe hardship in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each of the past three years; and of these how many were successful in (i) Inverclyde, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Scotland as a whole.

The relevant information is appended. Information is not available prior to June 1990 because statistics were not kept until that date. In addition, the 1991 statistics for Inverclyde and Strathclyde do not include information relating to March 1991. This information has been obtained from the Severe Hardship Claims Unit.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Severe hardship applications

	Number of applications	*Number successful*
1990 (June to December)		
Inverclyde	115	72
Strathclyde	2,767	2,141
Scotland	4,755	3,593
1991 (January to December)		
Inverclyde	323	244
Strathclyde	7,671	6,280
Scotland	13,641	10,983
Figures for Strathclyde and Inverclyde may be subject to amendment. Any amendments will be notified to you.		
1992 (January to December)		
Inverclyde	354	274
Strathclyde	12,929	10,586
Scotland	22,795	18,360

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether for the case of Mr. Christopher Fenlon (NL 02 20 33 C) he will set out *(a)* the date of application for disability living allowance, *(b)* the date of any subsequent appeal and *(c)* the date of the decision on the appeal.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Mr. Robert B. Jones, dated 1 April 1993:

As chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking whether for the case of Mr. Christopher Fenlon (NL 02 20 33 C) he will set out (a) the date of application for DLA, (b) the date of any subsequent appeal and (c) the date of the decision on the appeal.

Mr. Tenion applied for DLA on 17 June 1992. The claim was received on 7 July. On 11 August he requested a review of the decision dated 27 July. A decision was made on the review on 19 January 1993.

I have written to you separately and in greater detail about this matter.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects that Ms Margaret Owen, of Mullins avenue, Rumney, Cardiff, NI number NX 304327A, will receive a copy of her medical records requested on 18 January in relation to her claim for disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Mr. Rhodri Morgan, dated 1 April 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about when he expects that Ms Margaret Owen, 25 Mullins Avenue, Rumney, Cardiff, will receive a copy of her medical records requested on 18th January in relation to her claim for disability living allowance.

I have written to you separately and in greater detail about this matter.

I apologise for the delay in sending the evidence to Ms Owen. Staff are aware of the need to respond quickly to requests from our customers for such information.

You will be aware from Mr. Bichard's letter of 19 October 1992 to all MPs of the problems the Benefits Agency has faced since the launch of DLA and the positive steps taken to improve the situation. Since then we have taken further steps to improve the service to our customers including recruiting additional, and redeploying existing, staff to clear the backlog of reviews and four remote processing units have been set up using staff from other parts of the Benefits Agency. Taken together these steps will enable us to give the standard of service to which every customer is entitled and which we want to deliver.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for disability living allowance received in each month since April 1992 are still outstanding; if he will give a breakdown of the figures month by month since the introduction of the benefit; and what steps he is taking to clear up the backlog of outstanding claims.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from David Riggs to Ms Mildred Gordon, dated 1 April 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying on his behalf to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many claims for disability living allowance received in each month since April 1992 are still outstanding; if he will give a breakdown of the figures month by month since the introduction of the benefit; and what steps he is taking to clear up the backlog of outstanding claims.

The table below supplies the number of DLA claims (including Special Rules) registered by month and the number of cases outstanding by month of receipt. However, there will always be some cases which although received in one month will not be registered until the following month.

Month	Registered	Cases outstanding by month of receipt
April 1992	50,515	182
May 1992	45,376	172
June 1992	37,640	162
July 1992	36,105	142
August 1992	32,404	143
September 1992	35,570	148
October 1992	38,339	259
November 1992	36,867	503
December 1992	28,902	812
January 1993	34,416	1,949
February 1993	38,104	7,131

Outstanding cases as of 26 March 1993.

DLA management have urgently drawn up a Service Delivery Plan to target older claims received prior to 1 December 1992 to ensure that they are cleared as quickly as possible.

Of course there will always be a very small percentage of claims where customers or external medical professionals are unable to furnish the information required to clear cases within a period of some months.

The Service Delivery Plan also ensures 60 per cent. of new claims are cleared within 30 days in line with the national primary target for DLA. This national target is being consistently achieved.

To answer the second part of your question I have listed below the measures taken to clear the backlog of claims. These include:

- To increase the number of staff in DLA and AA65+ operations by over 800;
- Sanctioning overtime in all Disability Benefit Centres and Units—equivalent to approximately a further 300 more staff;
- Redeployment of staff from other parts of the Benefits Agency to speed claims processing;
- Establishing, staffing and equipping additional three processing units to handle new claims and so relieve some pressures on existing units;
- A review of operations to improve efficiency by rationalising procedures.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Income Support

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people aged 60 years or over receive income support in *(a)* Northumbria, *(b)* Tyne and Wear, *(c)* Cleveland, *(d)* Durham, *(e)* North Yorkshire, *(f)* South Yorkshire, *(g)* West Yorkshire and *(h)* Humberside;

(2) what is the take-up of income support on a caseload basis by people aged 60 years or over in the regions *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(b)* North.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Ann Robinson to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 1 April 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However as Mr. Bichard is away at the moment I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people aged 60 years or over receive Income Support in (a) Northumbria, (b) Tyne and Wear, (c) Cleveland, (d) Durham, (e) North Yorkshire, (f) South Yorkshire, (g) West Yorkshire and (h) Humberside, and also what is the take-up of Income Support on a caseload basis by people aged 60 years or over in the regions (a) Yorkshire and Humberside and (b) North.

The information is not available in the geographical areas requested. Information about the take-up of Income Support is not available.

However, we do retain information concerning the number of recipients of Income Support aged 60 or over by District, and this is appended. The information has been obtained from the latest available Management Information Statistics for Income Support as at the end of February 1993.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Income support recipients aged 60 or over by district

	Number
Northumberland	7,510
Newcastle	12,590
North Tyneside	6,431
South Tyneside	12,793
North Durham	10,511
South Durham	9,515
Wearside	10,323
North Tees	7,834
South Tees	9,068
Barnsley	5,475
Doncaster	7,000
East Yorkshire	9,125
Hull	16,296
Rother and Dearne	9,432
Sheffield East	11,016
Sheffield West	10,459
South Humberside	11,596
Bradford	11,476
Yorkshire Pennine	11,506
Kirklees	11,353
Leeds Aire and Wharfe	9,335
Leeds Ridings	12,967
North Yorkshire	11,311
Wakefield	8,077

Information obtained from latest available Income Support Management Information Statistics.

Care Homes (Residential Allowance)

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the rules relating to the payment of residential allowance during absences from residential care and nursing homes.

Mr. Burt: A number of representations have been received recently from Members and others on this issue. In the light of the concerns raised we have carefully considered all the implications for the new community care arrangements, particularly for local authorities. We have decided to extend the payment of residential allowance for absences of up to six weeks due to admission to hospital and up to three weeks for other reasons. Details of the new arrangements will be announced shortly.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the benefit recommended by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council for underground coal miners with emphysema and chronic bronchitis will be paid to the widows or other dependants of men suffering from these diseases who have died since the IIAC's report was submitted to him in August 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 29 March that regulations will be

introduced to prescribe chronic bronchitis and emphysema as industrial diseases in relation to underground coal miners with effect from 13 September 1993. Industrial injuries disablement benefit is not payable for periods prior to the date of prescription of an industrial disease.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Arab Boycott

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigations have been made of the impact of the Arab boycott on British exports.

Mr. Needham: Trade frustrated by the boycott cannot be measured.

Medical Products (Malta)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what tariffs or restrictions are applied to medical products manufactured in Malta and exported to EC countries.

Mr. Needham: Under the terms of the EC/Malta association agreement, medical products manufactured in Malta enter the Community without tariff or other restriction. Such products must however comply with any national technical requirements or standards, which currently vary from member state to member state.

Paper Recycling

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the British Paper and Board Industry Federation about waste paper recycling; what new measures Her Majesty's Government now propose to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I have on two occasions recently met members of the British Paper and Board Industry Federation to discuss waste paper recycling. The federation expressed concerns to us over the impact of the German packaging regulations which we are taking very seriously indeed. My right hon. Friend has written to European Commissioners and to the German Economics Minister about this matter, and we are urgently considering what further action, consistent with our EC and international obligations, might be taken to alleviate the difficulties being experienced by some sectors of the United Kingdom recycling industry.

"The Prospects for Coal"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received from Nuclear Electric plc and Scottish Nuclear in regard to the prospects for improvement in performance of existing nuclear reactors to which reference is made in the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", Cm. 2235, at paragraph 7.66.

Mr. Eggar: I have received appropriate information from Nuclear Electric to allow me to discharge my responsibilities as shareholder. One of the formal objectives set by Government for Nuclear Electric is that the company should achieve a continued increase in electricity generation, provided that this is economically justified. The means by which Nuclear Electric fulfils this objective, including improvements in the performance of existing nuclear stations, is a management matter for the company.

Scottish Nuclear Limited is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will specify those organisations or individuals to which reference is made in the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", Cm. 2235, at paragraphs 7.68 to 7.70, which are respectively in favour of *(a)* reducing the current nuclear component and *(b)* maintaining the current nuclear component in electricity generation.

Mr. Eggar: As the White Paper makes clear, the principal organisations advocating a reduction in the nuclear component in electricity generation were those representing coal mining interests, supported to some extent by consumer groups, environmental groups and the privatised generators. Those who advocated maintaining the nuclear component included the major players in the nuclear industry together with unions and employers' groups and some academics. However, many organisations and individuals discussed the role of nuclear generation as one among a number of issues in their evidence.

A list of all those who submitted evidence forms an appendix to the White Paper, and copies of the evidence are available in the Library.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he gave to increasing the target for combined heat and power beyond 2,000 MW by the year 2000, in preparation of paragraph 8.24 of his White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", Cm 2235.

Mr. Eggar: The existing target for combined heat and power, which represented a doubling of capacity by the year 2000, was set on the basis of market potential in 1990. My Department, in consultation with the Department of the Environment and others, will be reviewing this target when we have more experience of the developments which are taking place within the new structure of the electricity supply industry.

Insolvency Practitioners

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inspections were carried out by the insolvency service in each of the last three years into the quality of work of insolvency practitioners; in how many cases practitioners were referred to their relevant supervisory bodies; and what other action was taken.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The insolvency service visits insolvency practitioners to ensure their compliance with the statutory requirements and has carried out 140 such visits to insolvency practitioners since April 1992. Reports are forwarded to the relevant licensing body for its consideration. A smaller number of such visits were also made before April 1992 but statistics are not readily available.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the bodies responsible for the supervision and regulation of insolvency practitioners; what duties are laid on such bodies under the Insolvency Act 1986; and how many practitioners are regulated by each body.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The following professional bodies have satisfied the Secretary of State for the purposes of regulating the professional practices. They enforce rules to ensure that those individuals they authorise are fit and proper to act as insolvency practitioners and meet acceptable levels of education and practical experience.

The number of individuals authorised by each body is shown in brackets.

The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants: (114).
The Insolvency Practitioners Association: (267).
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales: (953).
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland: (86).
The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland: (200).
The Law Society: (183).
THe Law Society of Scotland: (40).

In addition, the Secretary of State directly authorises 147 insolvency practitioners.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of whether the regulation of insolvency practitioners is meeting the requirements of the Insolvency Act 1986; and what action he proposes to improve those standards.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since the introduction of licensing, action has been taken by the appropriate authorising body to withdraw authorisation, where it is satisfied that an insolvency practitioner is no longer a fit and proper person to act as such. Misconduct not amounting to evidence that the practitioner is no longer fit and proper has resulted in lesser disciplinary action.

As part of its continuing review of the effectiveness of the insolvency legislation, the insolvency service introduced routine visits to insolvency practitioners to monitor their compliance with statutory requirements. The licensing bodies are committed to carrying out such visits on their own members.

Clothing and Textiles

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many multi-fibre arrangements with third world countries are currently in operation in the case of *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Germany; what are the latest figures for clothing and textile (i) exports and (ii) imports for *(a)* and *(b)* which country is the world's largest exporter of clothing and textiles; and what is the United Kingdom's rank.

Mr. Needham: Agreements with supplying countries under the multi-fibre arrangement (MFA) are negotiated by the European Commission and apply equally to all EC member states. There are currently 27 MFA agreements.

In 1991, the latest year for which figures are available, the value of United Kingdom exports of textiles and clothing was £4·7 billion and imports totalled £8·4 billion. In the same year German exports totalled £12·6 billion against imports of £21·5 billion.

In 1990, the latest year for which complete comparative figures are available, Hong Kong was the world's largest exporter of textiles and clothing (£13·5 billion). In the same year, the United Kingdom was ranked 10th with exports totalling £4·7 billion.

Assistance to Business (France)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on assistance made available to businesses locating in the Nord Pas de Calais region by the French Government and French local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the level of comparable assistance currently available to businesses in Dover, Deal and east Kent.

Mr. Needham: I understand that a range of assistance from central Government and the regional council is available to businesses in Nord Pas de Calais. In east Kent, businesses have access to the overseas trade services provided by my Department, to the DTI consultancy scheme and to technology support. We are currently carrying out a review of the assisted areas in Great Britain and will take into account all of the arguments advanced about east Kent.

Natural Rubber

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom position with regard to the renegotiation of the international natural rubber agreement.

Mr. Needham: Government policy towards international commodity agreements was given by the then Minister for Trade in response to a question from the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West, (Mr. Page) on 21 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *767-8*. Against this background, we do not consider that a third international natural rubber agreement is desirable.

The United Kingdom acts in such matters in consultation with other member states of the European Community. Other member states are also opposed to renegotiation at present.

Overseas Projects

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library details of the current membership, constitution and operating brief of the Overseas Project Board and the Export Group for Constructional Industries.

Mr. Needham: I am placing details of the Overseas Project Board (OPB) in the Library, with a copy of the 1991-92 annual report and forward plan of the British Overseas Trade Board, which covers the OPB's activities.

The Government are not responsible for the Export Group for the Constructional Industries, which is a trade association for British contracting companies and funded entirely by its members.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he now intends to announce the result of his review of the assisted area status map.

Mr. Heseltine: The needs and circumstances of all areas are being carefully considered in the assisted areas map review. The results will be announced as soon as possible, after the necessary clearance from the European Commission.

Coal Industry

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his reply to the First report from the Trade and Industry Select Committee on British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal in relation to

recommendation 33 on the interest of the consumer, Cm 2235, page 131, what period of time he assumed for the consumers' interest when formulating his response.

Mr. Eggar: As the Government's response to recommendation 33 makes clear, the main protection for the interests of electricity consumers lies in the development of effective competition in the electricity supply industry. The development of competition is a continuing process, which began with electricity privatisation, and which will be further increased by the relaxation of the franchise limit for the RECs next year.

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the list of countries who have agreed with the International Atomic Energy Agency methods of inspection of nuclear installations.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the topic is published in the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency; a copy of the report for 1991 is available in the Library.

Offshore Exploration

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of his Department's forecasts of the number of exploration and appraisal drilling wells in the United Kingdom continental shelf in each of the next five years *(a)* prior to the Budget and *(b)* in light of the Budget's proposed changes to the oil taxation regime; and if he will also break down the figures by sector of the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Eggar: My Department does not publish five-year forecasts of the number of exploration and appraisal wells in the United Kingdom continental shelf. It does, however, conduct regular surveys of company intentions to drill wells looking up to two years ahead. The results of the last survey were published in the August 1992 issue of "Energy Trends", a copy of which is in the Library.

Oil Taxation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department will be revising its Brown Book forecasts in light of the Budget changes to the oil taxation regime and their likely impact; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Brown Book forecasts for petroleum production from 1993 to 1997 to be included in the Brown Book were published on 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *252-53*. The tax changes announced in the Budget are not expected to have a significant effect on production over this period; and there are no plans to revise the figures before the Brown Book is published at the end of April.

Structural Funds Regulations

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek to ensure in the current negotiations on the new Structural Fund Regulations, that *(a)* all projects and programmes comply with EC environmental legislation and policy and *(b)* all applications for funding submitted to the European Commission contain adequate and appropriate environmental information.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* The Government fully agree that structural funds projects and programmes should comply with EC environmental legislation and policies. The Government agree also therefore that, where appropriate, applications for funding should contain adequate environmental information. Full account must be taken account of these concerns during the review of the structural funds regulations.

Environmental Management

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has recently received from the textile industry in connection with BS 7750 on environmental management.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 31 March 1993]:* My hon. Friend has written to me about correspondence he has received from the textile industry on BS 7750. This is the only representation I have received.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make a statement on the progress which has been made in connection with the pilot programme relating to the introduction of the BSI standard 7750 for environmental management; how many companies participated in that programme; what success they have had in meeting the requirements; what form of accreditation they will receive on successful completion; and what estimate he has made of the costs which they have incurred in participating in the pilot programme;

(2) by what authority, and through what mechanism, accreditation will be given to those companies which have successfully met the requirements of the BS 7750 standard for environmental management.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 31 March 1993]:* In issuing BS 7750 the BSI made clear that it would be reviewed following the completion of the pilot programme. That programme is not yet complete and BSI has not therefore made an assessment of how successful companies have been in applying it. I understand that some 230 companies are implementing the standard in the programme; participation is voluntary and no estimate is available of the costs to the participants. I will ask the chief executive of BSI to write to my hon. Friend when BSI has reached a considered view of the outcome of the programme.

Companies may apply the standard and may contract a third party to certify that they have done so. My Department is considering whether it should set up a scheme to accredit such certifying bodies in relation to the revised version of BS 5570.

Rechar

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much Rechar money has been *(a)* approved by his Department, *(b)* granted to and *(c)* spent in (i) the east midlands and (ii) Nottingham, since the inception of the scheme; and if he will list the projects and their cost in each category.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

A total of 280 applications have so far been received for the east midlands Rechar programme, seven of which relate to Nottingham. To date, 104 applications, worth £7·6 million in European regional development fund grant, have been approved. Some £2·7 million has been paid. The remaining applications are being evaluated, and

if approved as submitted would attract grant of £2·05 million. In Nottingham one project has been approved with a grant of £0·08 million.

Farriers

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints have been received by his Department dealing with restriction of entry into statutory training systems under the Farrier (Registration) Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The Department has received two letters of complaint during the past year about the scheme for training apprentice farriers under the Farriers (Registration) Acts 1975 and 1977.

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what consideration his Department is giving to the licensing of and registration requirements in relation to the Farriers (Registration) Acts; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he proposes to introduce legislation to repeal the Farriers (Registration) Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply. There are no present plans to repeal the Farriers (Registration) Acts 1975 and 1977. The Acts are kept under regular review by this Department, to ensure that their requirements remain necessary and appropriate.

Additionally, the Government are committed to reviewing all regulations which impact upon business, and the Acts will be considered as part of that exercise.

Mr. Bell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what mechanisms exist for monitoring the work of registered farriers in accordance with the Farriers (Registration) Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The Farriers (Registration) Acts 1975 and 1977 established a body called the Farriers Registration Council. The council is responsible for registering farriers and ensuring recognised standards of farriery.

DEFENCE

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Aitken: The numbers of women, disabled and ethnic minority staff in grade levels 1 to 7 and overall are given in the table. These figures exclude our executive agencies, the Meteorological Office and the Defence Research agency. I have asked the chief executives to write to the hon. Member.

	Registered disabled[1]	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Non-registered disabled*[1]	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Ethnic minority*[2]	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Women*	*Percentage of staff in grade*
Grade 1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	2	4·2	—	—	2	4·3
4	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4·0
5	—	—	9	2·9	11	3·5	14	4·5
6	—	—	10	1·9	< 10	< 1·0	15	2·9
7	3	0·1	77	3·8	31	1·5	130	6·4
Total non-industrial and industrial staff	1,439	1·1	3,312	4·0	1,849	1·5	40,634	32·0

[1] Figures based on responses to voluntary disability surveys.
[2] Figures based on responses to voluntary ethnic origin survey.

Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when it is now expected that the A90 building will reach its full production capacity.

Mr. Aitken: Following completion of red commissioning A90 production capacity will be developed to meet the needs of the Trident programme.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected delay between the completion of red commissioning and declaration of full operational capability for *(a)* A89, *(b)* A90 and *(c)* A91 at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: A89 is now operational. It is not expected that there will be any delay between the end of red commissioning in either A90 or A91 and planned operational use.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of decommissioning, according to International Atomic Energy Agency guidelines, those facilities due to be replaced by the new capital works programme at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The decommissioning programme for such facilities is in its initial stages and will take many years to complete. It is not yet therefore possible to determine the likely cost.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date red commissioning is scheduled to be *(a)* started and *(b)* completed in (i) A89, (ii) A90 and (iii) A91 at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: Red commissioning is scheduled to be started and completed as follows:

(i) A89—This facility became operational in August 1992 following completion of red commissioning.
(ii) A90—Red commissioning is scheduled to start later this year and will take several months.
(iii) A91—There is currently no scheduled date for the start of red commissioning.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date white commissioning was *(a)* started and *(b)* completed in (i) A89, (ii) A90 and (iii) A91 at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The information is as follows:

(i) White commissioning was started in A89 in March 1992 and completed in August 1992.
(ii) White commissioning was started in A90 in 1990 and is still in progress.
(iii) White commissioning was started in A91 in 1991 and is in abeyance.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current total estimated cost of the new capital works projects at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The current total estimated cost of the major programme of capital works at AWE Aldermaston referred to in the Commons Defence Select Committee Fifth Report 1988-89 is £1·2 billion at 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the current work force at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston in regard to the appointments of Brown and Root as management contractors.

Mr. Aitken: It is Hunting-BRAE Limited and not Brown and Root (one of their parent organisations) who have been selected to operate the atomic weapons establishment. I have received no representations from the current workforce at Aldermaston concerning Brown and Root's involvement in the Hunting-BRAE consortium.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment was made of the health and safety record of Brown and Root Inc. before awarding the contract to operate the Aldermaston nuclear weapons plant;

(2) what assessment he made of the safety record of Hunting plc in advance of awarding the contract to manage the Atomic Weapons Establishment from 1 April.

Mr. Aitken: A comprehensive and detailed assessment was carried out on all tenders received for the contract to operate AWE. Safety factors were extremely important in judging the competition. The fact that Hunting-BRAE were appointed as AWE operating contractor demonstrates that we have full confidence in their meeting our rigorous safety standards and that their parent organisations were judged to be fully acceptable in terms of the demanding safety role and responsibility at AWE.

Kineton Armaments Depot

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the role and function of the proposed incinerator to be built at the central armaments depot, Kineton; what is the schedule for its construction; and what materials it is intended to destroy;

(2) what regulations exist for controlling the emissions from the proposed incinerator to be built at the central armaments depot, Kineton.

Mr. Aitken: The MOD has a requirement to demilitarise a proportion of its ammunition through an incineration facility. This includes surplus ammunition which has to be burned at high temperatures, and recoveries of explosive ordnance which may be of an uncertain condition or age. Previously, these types of ammunition have been dumped at sea, but that practice has now ceased. We plan to examine the potential for incineration to be carried out commercially before deciding upon the need for a MOD facility. In the event that a MOD facility were required, it would be designed to fully meet the emissions requirements as set out in the 1990 Environmental Protection Act and described in detail in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution guidance note no. IPR 5/1.

White and Red Commissioning

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the differences between white commissioning and red commissioning.

Mr. Aitken: White commissioning is the process of proving that new plant and facilities operate safely and satisfactorily using similar but non-radioactive materials. Red commissioning is the process of proving that the new plant facilities operate safely and satisfactorily using limited amounts of the actual radioactive materials.

Windscale Decommissioning

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's expected contribution to the costs of decommissioning the Windscale piles and associated chimneys; and what is the total estimated cost of this operation.

Mr. Aitken: My Department is making a contribution of 91·5 per cent. towards the costs incurred in decommissioning the Windscale piles and associated chimneys. Work currently being undertaken constitutes the intial stages of a programme which is expected to take at least 50 years to complete. It is, therefore, too early to determine the likely total cost.

Low Flying

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of aircraft movements authorised for flying below 250 ft over the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992; on how many days such low flying took place in each year; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures for (i) the northern Scotland tactical training area, (ii) the central Wales tactical training area, (iii) the Borders tactical training area and (iv) other areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of aircraft movements authorised for flying below 250 ft within the tactical training areas is set out in the table. The number of days on which such flying actually took place is not available, however, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Figures in the table relate to the number of days on which flying was authorised to take place. We would expect actual figures to be significantly lower because alternative dates are often pre-booked for use in case of bad weather. Between August 1990 and March 1991 all three tactical training areas were made available on weekdays for essential operational low flying training associated with the United Kingdom's commitment in the Gulf. Operational low flying in the United Kingdom is confined to the three tactical training areas.

	Tactical training areas			
	Northern Scotland	*Central Wales*	*Borders*	*Total*
1991				
Operational low flying (OLF) movements	468	90	1,256	1,814
Number of days on which OLF authorised	126	115	119	360
1992				
OLF movements	979	174	2,067	3,220
Number of days on which OLF authorised	165	125	187	477

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-flying sorties carried out over the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992 calculated by (i) counting the number of sorties directly and (ii) the pre-1985 method of logging movements between low-flying areas.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

	1991	*1992*
Number of sorties	127,400	131,464
The approximate number of sorties flown using the pre-1985 method	99,636	111,288

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of low-flying sorties flown over the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992 was accounted for by (i) fast jets, (ii) light jet trainers, (iii) heavy propeller-driven aircraft, (iv) light propeller-driven aircraft and (v) helicopters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Per cent.

Category	*Proportion of sorties flown*	
Fast jets	58·13	55·90
Light jet trainers	7·53	5·34
Heavy propeller-driven aircraft	1·36	1·79
Light propeller-driven aircraft	3·35	5·13
Helicopters	29·63	31·84

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many breaches of low flying regulations were reported to the relevant authorities by the aircrew involved in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of low-flying sorties flown over the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992 was represented by (i) British military aircraft, (ii) the United States Air Force aircraft and (iii) other aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Operating authority	*Proportion of sorties flown*	
	1991 *Per cent.*	*1992* *Per cent.*
British military	83·9	89·0
USAF	14·7	9·4
Others	1·4	1·6

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force police personnel are currently employed on surveying potential new areas for low flying; and if he will make a statement on the criteria and method used by the Royal Air force police when surveying potential new areas for low flying.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to change the basic structure of the United Kingdom low-flying system implemented in 1979. Two RAF Police senior NCOs are, however, occupied full time in carrying out a continuous review of the system to ensure that it remains properly reflective of current environmental and flight safety considerations.

Guards Officers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the number of officers currently serving in the Guards, other than quartermasters, whose parents were members of socio-economic group 5 when the commission was made.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Jasmin plc

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work has been carried out for his Department by Jasmin plc of Bulwell, Nottingham, on whether the tests required by his Department on nerve detectors were necessary; over what period the work was carried out; what was its cost; and what plans he has to compensate the company for that work.

Mr. Aitken: Over the last five years the Department has had many contracts with Jasmin, totalling over £10 million in value. The work has been primarily in the fields of chemical and vapour detection and fire control simulators. All tests required by the Department on nerve agent detectors have been necessary. As is our normal practice, payments will continue to be made for all work that has been properly completed in accordance with the terms and conditions of our contracts.

MoD Employees, Northern Ireland

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed by the Ministry of Defence in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Aitken: At 1 January 1993, the Ministry of Defence employed 2,878 full-time and part-time civil servants in Northern Ireland.

Submarine Refitting

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will name the consultants appointed by him to report on the proposals of the two royal dockyards for refitting submarines;

(2) what are the terms of reference of *(a)* the financial consultants and *(b)* the civil engineers, appointed to scrutinise the nuclear submarine refitting bids submitted by the royal dockyards;

(3) if he will publish reports prepared by the consultants assessing the rival bids for the nuclear submarine refitting programme.

Mr. Aitken: A range of specialist consultants have for some considerable time provided advice on future arrangements for warship refitting, chief among these being Coopers and Lybrand (financial and business advice), and, by sub-contracts to Coopers and Lybrand, Allot and Lomax (civil engineering) and the safety and reliability directorate of AEA Technology (nuclear safety). The various consultants provide assessments of, and advice on, those aspects of the proposals from the two Royal Dockyard contractors that fall within their area of expertise. Central to their advice is much commercially sensitive information as well as classified material; their advice will therefore not be published. We will, however, release as much information as possible, subject to the constraints of commercial confidentiality and security, once we have announced our proposals to the House.

Naval Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the results of the latest evacuation exercises at Rosyth and Devonport dockyards.

Mr. Aitken: Evacuation of the nuclear licensed sites within the Rosyth and Devonport dockyards is exercised annually. Both the most recent exercises were conducted satisfactorily. Evacuation procedures involving the wider dockyard workforce are tested periodically during nuclear accident response major exercises. The most recent such exercises took place at Rosyth in October 1989 and at Devonport in January 1993. In both cases the evacuations were completed satisfactorily.

Employees, Gosport

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the number of *(a)* uniformed service personnel, *(b)* his Department's civilian personnel and *(c)* defence dependent civilian personnel who are currently employed within the constituency of Gosport.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 1 July 1992, 5,849 service personnel and 3,904 full and part-time MoD civilian civil servants were based in the Gosport local authority area. No figures are available for the number of defence dependent civilians in the Gosport constituency.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: One.

Service Secondments

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for defence how many service personnel have been seconded to outside organisations from each of the services in each of the last five years; if he will list these organisations and the roles undertaken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No Royal Navy or Army personnel have been seconded to outside civilian organisations in the last five financial years.

RAF personnel have been seconded to British Aerospace to provide specialist operational, maintenance and support services in connection with the company's contract with the Royal Saudi Air Force, as follows:

	Number
1988-89	107
1989-90	127
1990-91	116
1991-92	52
1992-93	36

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines cover terms and conditions of employment of service personnel who go on secondment to outside organisations; what insurance conditions apply to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The terms and conditions of employment of service personnel seconded to civilian organisations are normally set out in memoranda of understanding between my Department and the organisation concerned. My Department does not purchase insurance to cover service personnel. Those on secondment are in the same position as they are when serving with British forces; they are able to claim compensation from any party, including my Department and the organisation to which they are seconded, if they are injured due to the negligence of that party. In addition, they remain eligible for invaliding benefits payable under the armed forces pension scheme.

RAF Bases

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many man hours were spent on *(a)* search and rescue work and *(b)* national defence work at each of the RAF bases in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information is not recorded on this basis.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of callouts of the search and rescue service from RAF Leuchars in each month in 1992 and to

date in 1993; on how many of those occasions search and rescue services were on standby at other RAF stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

RAF Leuchars—search and rescue callouts

Month	*1992 Total number of callouts*	*1993 Total number[2] of callouts*
January	9	20
February	11	15
March	9	[1]8
April	12	
May	8	
June	18	
July	14	
August	21	
September	8	
October	7	
November	9	
December	5	
Total	131	[1]43

[1] Provisional figure only.
[2] To end February.

RAF search and rescue services are on standy 24 hours at other RAF stations with the exception of RAF Chivenor which is on standy during daytime only.

University Air Squadron

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much the running of the University Air Squadron has cost in each of the last five years; where it has been based; how many students have benefited from it in each of the last five years; what fees are payable by the students; if any changes are planned in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 17 university air squadrons (UAS) located around the United Kingdom and the headquarters is at RAF Cranwell. Responsibility budgets were not in operation prior to financial year 1991-92 and therefore figures are not available. Direct cash costs for financial year 1991-92 were £9·2 million and £8·8 million for financial year 1992-93; 484 students joined the UASs in 1988; 446 in 1989; 496 in 1990; 452 in 1991 and 500 in 1992. Students do not pay fees to the UAS organisation and attend under a bursary scheme or cadetships. Southampton UAS is to relocate from Lee on Solent to Boscombe Down with effect from 19 April 1993.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer from the Foreign Secretary of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *33*, if he will list those organisations his Department has received representations from, or initiated contact with, on the issue of the first preparatory committee meeting of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has regular contacts with a range of organisations which have an interest in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Bosnia No-fly Zone

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the imposition of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina will have on the safety and ability of British Forces serving with the United Nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina to carry out the role currently assigned to them.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We regard the safety of our forces serving in Bosnia as a paramount consideration. All necessary steps will be taken to reduce to the minimum the risks which those forces face. Any change in that risk that could result from the imposition of the no-fly zone or could come from any other source is being taken into account in our planning.

Army Bases (Guards)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to replace service personnel guarding Army bases in the United Kingdom with Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The mix of service personnel, MoD Police and MoD guard service used to protect MoD establishments, including Army bases, in the United Kingdom is kept under regular review. The mix at particular locations may change from time to time according to a variety of circumstances. Our aim is to provide the most cost effective and flexible manpower mix consistent with the level of security required at a specific location. There are no particular plans for a general redeployment of MOD Police to Army locations.

Surplus Departmental Properties

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from housing associations relating to his policy regarding the sale of surplus MoD accommodation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is regular contact between the Department and housing associations interested in purchasing surplus MoD accommodation and a number of deals are currently being negotiated.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to obtain from his United States counterpart a copy of the report, produced by the Central Intelligence Agency in July 1990, "Iraq's Growing Arsenal: Programs and Facilities".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Redundancies

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans the Government have to deal with those who will be homeless after being made redundant as a result of "Options for Change".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A wide range of resettlement advice and support is available to all personnel leaving the services. A joint services housing advice office has been set up to provide advice and guidance on housing options, working closely with the local authorities and housing

associations. Other measures include the sale or lease of surplus property to housing associations in return for the reservation of places for rent by service personnel, and the provision by the Housing Corporation of do-it-yourself shared ownership opportunities specifically for those leaving the services. Any redundee who has failed to find accommodation by the time he comes to leave the services, will be allowed to stay on temporarily in his married quarter provided it is not required for a service family.

ENVIRONMENT

Education Spending

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what correlation there is between the level of standard spending assessment per pupil and the league table of secondary school performance results.

Mr. Robin Squire: For English local education authorities, excluding the Isles of Scilly, in 1991-92 the SSA per pupil for 11 to 15-year-olds was negatively correlated with the corresponding proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A to C. However, authorities with similar levels of SSA per head exhibit a wide variation of performance at GCSE.

Clarence Dock, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when negotiations were first entered into by the Merseyside development corporation to acquire the Clarence dock site, Liverpool, from Oldham Brothers Ltd., what offers have been made to the owners; when the offers were withdrawn; what estimated costs have been incurred by both sides; whether a public inquiry is planned; what is its estimated cost; what plans the Merseyside development corporation has for the site; what timetable it has for resolving this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Merseyside development corporation made a first resolution for a compulsory purchase order in April 1989. On 20 April 1989 MDC wrote to Oldham Brothers Ltd, inquiring whether it be prepared to enter into negotiations.

Information as to offers made to the owners is commercial-in-confidence. I shall write about that to the honourable Member.

Costs of approximately £11,000 have been incurred by MDC to date. The costs incurred by Oldham Brothers are not known.

A public inquiry is to commence on 22 June 1993 with an anticipated hearing of four days. The full cost will not be known until after the hearing, but the estimated cost excluding legal fees is approximately £10,000.

MDC has identified the site for a mixed use development to include low rise offices/studios, water-sports centre, residential appartments and local shops and services.

The former Clarence dock power station has been partly demolished for several years and the remaining structure is derelict, acting as a disincentive to inward investment and redevelopment. For these reasons MDC wishes to conclude purchase at the earliest opportunity, subject to agreement on price assessed on the basis of the land compensation code. If the compulsory purchase order is confirmed the property could be transferred to MDC in spring 1994. If compensation cannot be agreed, the lands tribunal may determine the compensation payable.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the publication of the house condition survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Since work on the 1991 English house condition survey began in September 1991 10 questions have been asked in the House regarding its publication. In answer to a question on 26 March from the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) at column *739*, the Minister for Housing and Planning announced the timetable for the publication of the results of this survey.

Used Tyres

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new guidelines he plans to issue *(a)* to enable local authorities to more effectively deal with the problem of unregulated tyre dumps and *(b)* to ensure the safe disposal of used tyres so as to cause minimal effect on the environment.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities already have powers under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, the Refuse Disposal Amenity Act 1978 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to prosecute those guilty of treating, keeping or disposing of tyres illegally. The maximum penalty for such an offence is imprisonment for up to two years and an unlimited fine.

Those with waste tyres to dispose of are also subject to the duty of care under section 34 of the 1990 Act, which requires that they can pass waste tyres only to a carrier registered with the waste regulation authority or to a licensed disposal facility. A breach of the duty of care is a criminal offence punishable, on conviction on indictment, by an unlimited fine.

My Department is currently involved with the EC priority waste stream project group on used tyres and in the course of this work will be considering all possibilities for achieving satisfactory disposal of used tyres.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on the disposal of used tyres from its own car fleet.

Mr. Maclean: Used tyres from the Government car service are transferred for disposal to persons appropriately authorised for the purposes of the duty of care under section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken with other EC countries to identify a common policy on the safe disposal of used tyres.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

An EC "priority waste stream" group, made up of all interested parties, including member states, has for the past two years been devising action plans to reduce the environmental impact of used tyres. The group, in which my Department has participated fully, is expected to complete its work by the end of the year and to propose targets and measures aimed at reducing the quantities of used tyres going for disposal and at promoting their re-use, retreading, and recycling throughout the Community.

Energy Savings Trust

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what local authority representation there is in the decision-making structures of the Energy Savings Trust.

Mr. Maclean: There is no formal local or central government representation on the board of directors of the Energy Saving Trust. In addition to the chairman, Lord Moore, the trust's board consists of two representatives from British Gas, two from the regional electricity companies and four independent directors, who have been chosen for their wide knowledge and experience, which they bring to bear in developing and directing the trust.

Harmful Substances

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will implement section 140 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Maclean: Section 140 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 came into force two months after the Act was passed; the committee referred to in section 140(5) was established in July 1991 and several statutory instruments have been made using section 140.

Leases (Confidentiality Clauses)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to make it illegal to include confidentiality clauses in leases; and what consideration is being given by the Director General of Fair Trading as to whether such clauses are regarded as being anti-competitive.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 31 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), *Official Report*, columns *293-94*.

Housing Associations

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Members for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) and for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) of 24 March, *Official Report*, column *626*, when he expects his Department to complete its assessment of the impact of the proposed reduction in average grant levels to housing associations to 55 per cent. in 1995-96 on averge weekly rents for housing association tenants.

Mr. Baldry: Our consideration of evidence put forward by the Housing Corporation, the National Federation of Housing Associations and others about grant rates in 1994-95 and beyond is continuing. Final decisions about grant rates for 1995-96 would not normally be taken until late 1994.

City Action Teams

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what effect the planned future expenditure in respect of the eight existing city action teams as published in his Department's annual report will have on the level of activity of the teams;

(2) what plans he has to wind up each of the eight existing city action teams; and on what date.

Mr. Robin Squire: The city action teams' main task is the co-ordination locally of the Government's programmes for our urban areas, including city challenge. Our expenditure plans will enable that work to continue. The Government are keeping urban needs under review, taking account of information derived from the 1991 census and other sources, and will consider the future of city action teams in the light of that.

City Challenge

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each city challenge area, the most recent figures for *(a)* population, *(b)* area of geographical coverage, *(c)* number of residential dwellings, *(d)* unemployment rate, *(e)* the number of training places created since their inception and *(f)* the numbers completing training courses, by type of course.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table. Data are not available to show numbers completing training courses.

City challenge area	*Population* *(a)*	*Area (hectares)* *(b)*	*Residential dwellings* *(c)*	*Unemployment rate (percentage)* *(d)*	*Forecast training weeks 1993-94* *(e)*
Pacemakers:					
Bradford	42,997	4,400	15,184	36·0	17,040
Dearne Valley	76,000	5,750	32,004	16·0	n/a
Lewisham	28,000	494	12,000	20·8	28,300
Liverpool	4,000	138	1,196	27·0	n/a
Manchester	10,000	110	5,375	31·0	n/a
Middlesbrough	40,300	792	15,900	20·0	5,067
Newcastle	35,200	580	20,236	25·0	n/a
Nottingham	25,000	405	10,400	24·4	10,513
Tower Hamlets	13,500	145	4,071	21·8	n/a
Wirral	29,000	683	8,883	29	800
Wolverhampton	22,000	560	6,600	n/a	13,613
Round 2:					
Barnsley	17,000	850	n/a	12·5	285
Birmingham	12,000	265	5,000	26·5	3,654
Blackburn	19,500	400	6,000	22·0	4,375
Bolton	19,500	506	7,000	17·0	19,894
Brent	20,000	320	10,000	30·0	20,600

City challenge area	Population (a)	Area (hectares) (b)	Residential dwellings (c)	Unemployment rate (percentage) (d)	Forecast training weeks 1993-94 (e)
Derby	26,000	240	n/a	25·0	13,550
Hackney	23,000	215	8,027	23·6	19,323
Hartlepool	11,200	280	4,600	22·7	936
Kensington	25,000	216	11,000	18·1	3,777
Kirklees	20,000	550	7,000	[1]10·8	4,316
Lambeth	30,000	250	n/a	29·0	18,422
Leicester	13,600	370	n/a	13·6	1,000
Newham	17,000	518	6,899	20·8	22,300
North Tyneside	36,000	1,128	n/a	15·4	5,282
Sandwell	27,000	606	9,300	16·0	13,211
Sefton	29,000	800	n/a	36·0	100
Stockton	23,600	695	10,000	22·8	6,786
Sunderland	37,000	2,950	12,680	[1]16·1	9,841
Walsall	15,000	470	5,000	17·2	n/a
Wigan	20,000	800	8,400	16·0	4,862

n/a = Data is not available.
[1] DOE estimate.
Sources:
(a)-(c) Original Pacemaker and Round 2 Bid Documents and Action Plans.
(d) Original Pacemaker and Round 2 Bid Documents and Action Plans. Since their submission, the unemployment rate may have changed.
(e) Training places are not available. The City Challenge output measure is a training week that is, more than 30 hours of weekly attendance for training. The data shown is a forecast, taken from draft 1993-94 decision letters and subject to revision.

Community Selfbuild Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings ministers in his Department have had with the Community Selfbuild Agency.

Mr. Baldry: I am not aware of any meetings in the past year.

Urban Land

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the proportion of land in urban use for each of the regions and counties in England; and what estimates there are for how this will change.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of urban growth between 1981 and 2001 for counties and regions of England, and the proportion of land projected to be in urban use in 2001, are available from tables 1(a) and 1(b) in this Department's report "Rates of Urbanisation in England 1981-2001", published by HMSO in 1990, and available in the House of Commons Library.

London Government

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has had from outside bodies calling for a single strategic authority to oversee transport, land use and environment in London; and if he will list them.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend has recently received representations from the Institute for Metropolitan Studies, from the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and from the CBI London region transport task force, calling for some form of strategic body with responsibility for transport, land use and the environment in London.

Council Tax Debtors

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards exist against the forced sale of council tax debtors' property as a result of charging orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: A local authority cannot apply for a charging order if the outstanding debt is less than £1,000. The making of a charging order is at the discretion of the court. The court will consider all the circumstances of the case, including the personal circumstances of the debtor and whether any other creditors of the debtor would be likely to be prejudiced by the making of an order.

Enforcement of a charging order by sale is a separate step. In deciding whether an application to enforce a charging order should be granted the court may have to balance the interest of the creditor with that of members of the debtor's family. The court may also have regard to the size of the debt outstanding in relation to the value of the dwelling to be sold.

Under both procedures the debtor has an opportunity to attend court and make representations.

Freemasons

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a code of practice for local authorities to ensure that local government employees declare any membership of masonic lodges in a public register.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have no plans to introduce such a code. Terms and conditions of employment for local government officers are matters for local authorities as employers.

Manchester City Planning Officer

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received from Manchester's city planning officer about concerns over circular 26/92; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The city planning officer has written to my Department following the demolition of the Tommy Ducks public house. That building was not listed as being of architectural or historic interest, nor was it in a conservation area; consents under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 were therefore not required. The demolition of certain other types of building is subject to planning control under the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, section 13. Whether the demolition is subject to control depends on whether the building is either a dwelling house, or a building adjoining a dwelling house. The chief planning officer's view is that Government guidance on the interpretation of the legislation is unclear. I do not share that view, but it is inevitable that central guidance cannot deal with every eventuality and that cases must be considered individually by local planning authorities. The council concluded in this case that the building demolished was not one which fell within the category of buildings subject to planning control; and it would not be right for me to comment on that decision. My officials have replied to the chief planning officer along these lines.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of homeless people in London, divided in *(a)* couples, *(b)* families with children and *(c)* single people.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities in England report the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Houseing Act 1985 in their quarterly P1 return.

The latest estimate for London appears in table 1 of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act 1985: England. Statistics for the fourth quarter 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Information on households with dependent children and households in the other priority need categories and young single people in non-priority need can be found in percentage terms in table 3 of the same publication. The reported information does not identify couples and older single people and my Department has no estimates.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of people in London in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation, *(b)* hostels for the homeless and *(c)* sleeping rough for the latest available date and 1982.

Mr. Baldry: Information is reported quarterly to the Department—half yearly before 1984—on homeless households for whom local authorities have accepted responsibility to secure permanent accommodation, under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Estimates of the number of such households in bed-and-breakfast and hostel accommodation in London at 31 December, including some on whom inquiries had not yet been completed, are as follows:

	Bed-and-breakfast	*Hostels (including women's refuges)*
1982	1,150	1,270
1992	3,820	3,550

In the 1991 census some 1,197 households were enumerated as sleeping rough in London on the night of 21-22 April. No count of persons sleeping rough was made in 1982.

Petrol and Diesel Fuel

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the additional costs faced by local authorities resulting from the increased duties on petrol and diesel fuel and on authorities which have budgeted to spend at their limit; and what additional resources he is making available to such authorities in order to prevent cuts in services.

Mr. Robin Squire: In reaching his decisions on the local government finance settlement, my right hon. and learned Friend took into consideration the expected level of inflation and the anticipated increases in pay and prices. Responsible local authorities make allowances for foreseeable expenditure arising during a financial year when setting their budgets, and we regard the effect of mineral oil excise duties on local authorities as constituting such expenditure. We do not therefore consider it appropriate or necessary to make additional resources available.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the results of stratospheric ozone depletion measurement over the United Kingdom and the northern hemisphere during March; and if he will make a statement on the significance of the results.

Mr. Maclean: Measurements of total ozone made at Lerwick and Camborne during March were between 10 and 13 per cent. below the long-term average for the month. This compares with measurements in February over 20 per cent. below the long-term average which I reported in my answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 11 March. These results reflect conditions over a wide area of the northern hemisphere where ozone levels have been affected by meteorological conditions and possibly the impact of the Mount Pinatubo volcanic eruption, as well as any contribution from ozone depleting substances.

The risk of an Arctic ozone hole developing this year is now rapidly diminishing as the stratosphere warms up. The reductions in ozone this year have not resulted in any increase in ground level ultraviolet radiation which is within the range expected for the time of year. There are no implications for health. While we rely on stratospheric ozone to absorb the potentially damaging ultraviolet radiation from the sun, radiation is naturally very low at this time of year, even on clear days, because of the low angle of the sun. Analysis of measurements made this year will be included in the next report of the Department's stratospheric ozone review group, due to be published in the autumn.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the principles of the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and the control regime under the EC Waste Shipments Regulation.

Mr. Maclean: The United Nations Environment Programme Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal entered into force in May 1992. The convention provides a framework for states to ban imports of hazardous waste. Shipments are not allowed between parties and non-parties without specific agreements. Where shipments do take place the convention provides a global system of environmental controls.

The convention does not distinguish between shipments of waste for final disposal and for recovery. In March 1992 OECD countries agreed a decision on the control of transfrontier movements of wastes destined for recovery operations. This decision, which is compatible with the convention, placed wastes on one of three lists—green, amber and red—according to the degree of hazard. Green list waste will only be subject to normal commercial controls. Red list waste will be subject broadly to the same controls as waste for disposal under the convention. Amber list waste will be subject to a more streamlined procedure.

The OECD controls have been incorporated in the EC waste shipments regulation agreed at Council in October under the United Kingdom presidency. The regulation will implement the EC's obligations under the Basel convention. The regulation's control system, like that of the convention, is based generally on the principle of prior informed consent.

The regulation will enable member states to ban imports of waste for disposal from other member states and EFTA countries, but there is an exemption for states which do not produce hazardous waste in a sufficient quantity to make the provision of specialised disposal facilities economic. Imports for disposal will also be allowed from other countries which are parties and from countries with which the Community or member states have bilateral agreements. Such imports will be permitted only where exporting countries do not have and cannot reasonably acquire the technical capacity and necessary facilities in order to dispose of waste in an environmentally sound manner. Exports for disposal will be prohibited, except to EFTA countries which are parties.

Shipments of recoverables will continue between OECD countries and to and from non-OECD countries which are parties and/or have concluded bilateral agreements with the EC. All bilaterals involving exports of hazardous—amber and red list—waste outside OECD will include safeguards to ensure environmentally sound management. Exports will be prohibited where a third country refuses to accept them. Before green list waste is exported outside OECD the country of destination will be asked to state whether it will accept the shipments without going through amber or red control procedures. Where the country of destination regards a green list waste as hazardous, shipments of that waste will be subject to the appropriate control regime.

The Environment Council in December agreed the instrument of approval of the convention on behalf of the EC. Council agreed that the EC and member states would as far as possible ratify the convention simultaneously. Under the convention there is a 90-day period between ratification and becoming a party. The waste shipments regulation dictates the legal timetable for ratification. Ratification of the convention by the EC and member states on 6 February 1994 would enable the EC and member states to be parties on 6 May 1994, when the regulation applies. Council on 23 March agreed that the EC would ratify no later than 6 February. In the Government's view ratification any earlier would produce a legal vacuum between the date when the EC and member states became parties and the date of application of the regulation. Ratification on 6 February is therefore the legally correct and practical solution.

Countryside Stewardship Schemes

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the countryside stewardship scheme sites have been visited by Ministers or officials of his Department; if, for each site, he will give the name, location, date and rank of personnel involved; whether each site involved payments for additional access for the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Information is not kept in the form requested. The scheme is administered by the Countryside Commission. The Secretary of State, Ministers and officials from the Department have visited a number of countryside stewardship sites since the scheme launch in June 1991.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by county all the 1992 countryside stewardship scheme sites for which access payments are made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* A list in the form requested is being prepared. I will send it to the hon. Gentleman and will place copies in the Libraries of both Houses as soon as it is ready. Full details of each site will be sent to parish councils and will be included in new, improved county registers which will be sent to user groups and highway authorities within the next few months. Copies of the registers will be held at the Countryside Commission regional offices and headquarters and will be available on request. In addition, the Countryside Commission has reviewed its approach to signing and waymarking sites in light of first year experience. More robust and informative map boards will be put in place by June for all sites agreed in the first two years of the scheme. Paths and bridleways will be waymarked. The Countryside Commission is also considering the production of information leaflets to publicise sites further.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the linear access routes under the countryside stewardship scheme agreements made in 1992, involving additional access payments, are contiguous with pre-existing rights of way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Over 100 linear access routes included in 1992 countryside stewardship agreements or agreement offers are linked to existing public rights of way. No payment is made for existing rights of way under the countryside stewardship scheme.

Private Finance Initiative

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department has taken to implement the private finance initiative announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992 and in the Treasury private finance guidance published on 9 December 1992.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* Private finance already makes a contribution of about £2 billion a year to the achievement of the Department's objectives, notably in housing and urban development.

Private finance is an important element in our housing programme. Housing associations, which are the main providers of new social housing, are required to raise part of their development funds from the private sector; our objective is to increase the proportion of private funding in order to obtain the maximum benefit from the public resources available. In addition, some £1·5 billion of private finance has been raised as a result of large-scale voluntary transfers of local authority properties to housing associations; this finance is being used to improve existing stock, to repay debt and to develop new social housing. We continue to encourage investment in the private rented sector, and to consider how to maximise the use of private sector funding and expertise in meeting housing need.

The Department continues to look for new opportunities to use private finance. An initial list of 21 new urban development projects, has been identified on which proposals from interested developers and financial institutions have been invited. A copy has been placed in the Library. Further projects are in the pipeline.

On 23 March I met the chairman and senior executives of a number of leading development companies to discuss private finance; and I have held discussions with merchant banks and City financial institutions to explore ways in which projects could be financed using private finance.

In addition the Department will shortly publish guidance on how greater use could be made of private finance in the implementation of its policies and programmes.

Water Meters

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of domestic prepayment water meters installed in each water company area.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* I understand that the number of domestic prepayment water meters which have been installed to date by water companies is as follows:

	Number
Bristol Water plc	10
North West Water Ltd.	20
Severn Trent Water Ltd.	44
Southern Water Services Ltd.	70
South Staffordshire Water plc	30
Wessex Water Services Ltd.	51

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by water company area, the numbers and percentage of households with domestic water meters; and what the equivalent figures were for *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1987.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* Current estimates are shown in the table: similar information for earlier years is not available centrally.

Water company	*Metered supply households (000s)*	*Proportion per cent.*
Anglian Water Services Ltd.	48	3·3
Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water Company	5	3·3
Bristol Water plc	14	3·5
Cambridge Water Company	4	3·7
Chester Waterworks Company	1	2·3
Cholderton and District Water Company Ltd.	<1	1·5
Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig	29	2·8
East Surrey Water plc	3	2·6
Essex Water plc	10	1·9
Folkestone and Dover Water Services Ltd.	2	2·8
Hartlepools Water Company	<1	0·1
Mid Kent Water plc	4	2·2
Mid Southern Water plc	11	4·3
North East Water plc	6	1·1
North Surrey Water Ltd.	8	4·5
North West Water Ltd.	50	1·9
Northumbrian Water Ltd.	2	0·4
Portsmouth Water plc	<1	0·1
Severn Trent Water Ltd.	134	4·9
South East Water Ltd.	9	3·8
South Staffordshire Water plc	9	2·0
South West Water Services Ltd.	24	4·2
Southern Water Services Ltd.	90	10·5
Suffolk Water plc	4	3·9
Sutton District Water plc	<1	0·3
Tendring Hundred Water Services Ltd.	3	4·8
Thames Water Utilities Ltd.	96	3·3
Three Valleys Water Services plc	22	2·5
Wessex Water Services Ltd.	21	5·0
Wrexham and East Denbighshire Water Company	3	4·6
York Waterworks plc	<1	0·1
Yorkshire Water Services Ltd.	45	2·7
England and Wales	657	3·4

Note: Proportions may not tally exactly due to rounding.

Radon Gas

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to inform the public of the dangers arising from radon gas concentrations in dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 29 March 1993]:* In March 1991 the Government launched a publicity campaign in Cornwall and Devon, the counties where the greatest numbers of homes above the action level of 200 Bq m^{-3} are found, to inform householders of the potential health risk posed by radon. This campaign was extended to Northamptonshire and Derbyshire in October 1992. The leaflet "Radon in Houses" explains what radon is, provides information on assistance available and offers a free measurement service to householders. It was delivered to all homes in the affected areas of these counties, and to other appropriate outlets—libraries, citizens advice bureaux etc. Public service announcements were made available to local radio. As a result, radon concentrations

in some 100,000 homes have already been measured and 11,000 householders, whose homes have radon levels above the action level, have been advised on the further action which should be considered.

SCOTLAND

Mentally Ill (Care)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of caring for a mentally ill person in *(a)* a mental illness hospital, *(b)* a general hospital psychiatric unit, *(c)* a four-to-six-bed group home, *(d)* a staffed hospital and *(e)* in the patient's own home.

Mr. Stewart: The average cost per day of caring for a mentally ill inpatient in 1991-92 was as follows:

	Amount (£)
Mental Illness Hospital	74·20
General Hospital Psychiatric Units	108·90
Staffed Hospitals	77·60

Information on the costs of care in four-to-six-bed group homes and in patients' own homes is not collected centrally. The figure for staffed hospitals is the average cost for all hospitals which provide inpatient care for mentally ill persons.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers are in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments in *(a)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(b)* disadvantaged areas in each county in Scotland containing less favoured area land.

Sir Hector Monro: The information is set out in the table. It is based on payments under the 1992 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme.

County	*Number of Payments*	
	Severely disadvantaged areas	*Disadvantaged areas*
Aberdeen	798	190
Angus	149	16
Argyll	1,076	—
Ayr	743	100
Banff	387	51
Berwick	139	21
Cumbrae and Bute	48	4
Arran	88	—
Caithness	741	—
Clackmannan	15	—
Dumfries	682	13
Dunbarton	99	14
Fife	105	7
Inverness	2,590	3
Kincardine	156	21
Kinross	46	9
Kirkcudbright	548	3
Lanark	604	63
Lothian, East	36	4
Lothian, Mid	113	12
Lothian, West	65	4
Moray	167	6
Nairn	54	2
Orkney	942	—
Peebles	180	3
Perth	586	23
Renfrew	180	6
Ross	2,568	20
Roxburgh	288	12
Selkirk	117	—
Stirling	216	19
Sutherland	735	—
Wigtown	410	31
Shetland	1,589	—
Total	17,260	657

Livestock Auctions

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the turnover in terms of value, or livestock auctions for each county in Scotland; and how many auctions account for that value in each county.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is not held centrally.

Water Services

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been *(a)* allocated and *(b)* spent on capital works programmes for water services in each year since 1987-88 in relation to the compliance with European Community regulations and directives; what delays have taken place in efforts to achieve EC standards on (i) drinking water, (ii) bathing water and (iii) disposal of sewage sludge to land-based sites; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* Separate capital allocations are not made for specific parts of authorities' water and sewerage programmes. Projects related to meeting the requirements of EC directives come within the overall water and sewerage programme. Allocations and the outturn expenditure on water and sewerage are given in tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Virtually all drinking water improvement programmes are on target. Detailed information is available in the report "Drinking Water Quality in Scotland 1991", publication of which I announced in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) on 10 February. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

A £100 million programme of sewerage improvements has been drawn up for those bathing waters, arising from the EC bathing waters directive. The improvements are designed to enable compliance by 1997.

The predominant land-based disposal route for sewage sludge is to agricultural land. A recent survey has demonstrated that EC requirements are being attained. As a result of the EC urban waste water treatment directive which, among other things, provides for the ending of sea-based disposal by, at the latest, 1998, the quantity for land-based disposal will rise very steeply. There have been no delays in implementing this directive which was adopted only in 1991.

Table 1—Capital allocations for the water and sewerage programme (includes flood prevention and cost protection)

Year	£ million
1987-88	104·0
1988-89	112·5
1989-90	126·1
1990-91	138·4
1991-92	164·8
1992-93	224·1
1993-94	229·9

Table 2—Outturn capital expenditure on water and sewerage

Year	Water £ million	Sewerage £ million
1987-88	46·0	52·6
1988-89	54·1	56·5
1989-90	62·0	65·4
1990-91	66·0	78·5
1991-92	80·6	90·6

Figures for later years not yet available.

Hong Kong

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what efforts he is making to attract inward investment to Scotland from Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Locate in Scotland, through the work of its officials in the United Kingdom and overseas, promotes Scotland as a location for inward investment from the Asia Pacific region including Hong Kong.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 April 1993

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Contracting-out

Mr. Michael: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has sought external advice on whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive apply to any central or local government businesses that have been contracted out during the last 10 years; and whether any Department will be liable to compensation.

The Attorney-General: It is not the normal practice to disclose whether the Law Officers have advised on a matter. Likewise, the Law Officers would not normally disclose whether they had advised in conjunction with other counsel or had requested that external advice be obtained.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Listing

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his policy in respect of whether a company which is conducting a court listing field trial under the supervision of his Department should be allowed to sell dedicated computer software and equipment to trial participants as a condition of participation in the trial.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The role of the Lord Chancellor's Department is to co-operate in the court listing field trial through provision of listing information in electronic form. Overall supervision is the responsibility of the General Council of the Bar which is sponsoring the trial. The Department has no formal relationship with the trial participants.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether it is intended that one company only will be licensed to distribute court listing information after the current field trials of a computerised court listing system have ended.

Mr. John M. Taylor: At present the Lord Chancellor's Department has no plans for licensing companies to distribute court listing information. In the event of any such licensing being arranged, there is no reason in principle why this should be limited to a single company.

Legal Aid

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the amount of the legal aid budget *(a)* distributed to applicants and *(b)* spent on administration in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The net amount paid to solicitors and barristers in 1991-92 in respect of work done for legal-aided clients was £906 million. The administrative costs incurred by the Legal Aid Board in the same year amounted to £40·7 million. In addition, some administrative costs will have been incurred by the courts in respect of those parts of the legal aid scheme—chiefly criminal legal aid—for which they are responsible. These costs cannot be identified separately.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the application of his plans for legal aid to people on income support.

Mr. John M. Taylor: People receiving income support are presently eligible for free legal aid, advice and assistance and assistance by way of representation, and this will continue to be the case under the regulations which came into force on 12 April.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many of the appointments made by the Lord Chancellor as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Three of the current appointments made by the Lord Chancellor to public bodies listed under his Department in "Public Bodies" were made after a submission to the Prime Minister.

Landlord Mortgages

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he has any plans to bring forward legislation as proposed by the Law Commission in its November 1991 report "Transfer of Land: Land Mortgages".

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. The Law Commission's report on "Transfer of Land: Land Mortgages", Law Com. No. 204, contains extensive proposals for reform, which are still being considered by the Government.

Child Abuse

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many court proceedings concerning child abuse video-taped evidence has been admitted.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The provision for the giving in evidence of a video recording of an interview with a child witness in certain specified proceedings is contained in section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. This provision came into force on 1 October 1992. Since that date there have been nine cases in the Crown court where applications under section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to admit a pre-recorded video interview with a child witness have been granted. In two of these cases the defendant pleaded guilty and, therefore, the video tapes were not required in court.

Mr. French: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those courts where video-taped evidence has been *(a)* admitted and *(b)* refused in child abuse cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The provision for the giving in evidence of a video recording in certain specified proceedings is contained in section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. This provision came into force on 1 October 1992. Since that date pre-recorded video-taped interviews with child witnesses have been admitted and used in evidence in proceedings in the Crown court at Cardiff, Croydon, Newcastle and Wolverhampton. According to centrally collected statistics, no applications to admit video-taped evidence in child witness proceedings have been refused.

ENVIRONMENT

Caravan Sites

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make a statement on the response to his consultation paper, "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968"; when he expects to announce his conclusions; and in what form he will announce them.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on 31 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *291*.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley), *Official Report*, 24 March, columns *663-64*, on contaminated land, what additional resources he will make available to local authorities in support of their statutory powers to locate and deal with contaminated land while the new interdepartmental review group he announced today conducts its study.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities already receive general support through revenue support grant for their expenditure on environmental services. This includes expenditure in connection with their duties to identify contaminated land and to ensure that remedial measures are taken where necessary. The Government give additional support to authorities by means of supplementary credit approvals for investigation and remedial works on authorities' own sites or where it is impracticable to recover treatment costs from those responsible.

Home Insulation Grants

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many home insulation grants have been given in the last five years; and what was their value.

Mr. Maclean: There have been several different grant schemes for home insulation over the last five years.

The home efficiency scheme provides grants for loft, tank and pipe insulation, draughtproofing and energy advice. Since its inception in January 1991, some 387,000 grants have been provided at a cost of £55·6 million. Under the house renovation grant system, minor works assistance grants are available for thermal insulation. Since their introduction in April 1990, 11,300 homes have been treated at a cost of £3·8 million. Insulation is also sometimes installed as part of wider works under house renovation grants.

The energy grant scheme provided for draughtproofing materials. Between April 1988 and December 1990 some 360,000 homes were treated at a cost of £25·65 million. The homes insulation scheme provided some 185,800 grants at a cost of £19·4 million between April 1988 and March 1990.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total cost of the enterprise zone scheme in terms of rate relief and capital allowances in each year since 1981 at current prices.

Mr. Redwood: Approximate costs in 1992-93 prices are given in the table.

Year	*Capital Allowances*[1] *£ million*	*Rates Relief*[2] *£ million*
1981-82	35	9
1982-83	35	19
1983-84	25	23
1984-85	50	33
1985-86	85	42
1986-87	120	57
1987-88	95	73
1988-89	195	82
1989-90	160	106
1990-91	170	90
1991-92	—	80

Notes:

[1]The method of calculating capital allowance costs is currently being reviewed by Inland Revenue and final estimates will not be available until the summer. The estimated costs incurred in 1991-92 are not yet known.

[2]The cost of rate relief in 1990-91 and 1991-92 has been estimated, following the introduction of the Uniform Business Rate.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what schemes for enterprise zones are in the process of preparation and adoption but not yet designated;

(2) what plans he has to invite local authorities or corporations to draw up schemes for enterprise zones in the near future.

Mr. Redwood: Proposals for up to three new enterprise zones were announced by the President of the Board of Trade on Monday 29 March, *Official Report*, columns *30-31*.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the planned winding-up dates of all current enterprise zone schemes.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

	Date
Delyn	20 July 1993
Wellingborough	25 July 1993
Rotherham	15 August 1993
Londonderry	12 September 1993
Scunthorpe	22 September 1993
Wakefield (Dale Lane and Kinsley)	22 September 1993
Workington	3 October 1993
Invergordon	6 October 1993
North West Kent Nos. 1-5	30 October 1993
Middlesbrough	7 November 1993
North East Lancashire	6 December 1993
Tayside	8 January 1994
Telford	12 January 1994
Glanford	12 April 1994
Milford Haven Waterway	23 April 1994

	Date
Dudley (Round Oak)	2 October 1994
Lower Swansea Valley No. 2	5 March 1995
North West Kent Nos. 6 and 7	9 October 1996
Inverclyde	2 March 1999
Sunderland	26 April 2000
Lanarkshire	31 January 2003

London Buses

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had on the effect of the age of the London bus fleet on air quality in the capital.

Mr. Maclean: Emissions from heavy-duty diesel vehicles, including buses, were the subject of the 15th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (Command 1631) published in September 1991. The Government's response was published in October 1992. Among other things, this refers to measures already taken to improve the in-service testing of vehicles and the introduction of a telephone hotline to enable the public to report smoky vehicles. The response also stated that improvements would be made to the Department of Transport guide for maintaining roadworthiness. These would require operators to make regular engine management and maintenance checks in order to retain satisfactory emissions performance. Steps would also be taken to ensure that the public is made more aware of the existence of the telephone hotlines. These publicity measures will be implemented in the near future.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates of *(a)* the cost to a local authority of housing a homeless family for a year in a property which has been leased from a private owner, and *(b)* the average annual rent charged to homeless families for the occupation of a property which a local authority has leased from a private owner, (i) in London and (ii) in the rest of England.

Sir George Young: The information is not available centrally and my Department has no estimates.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of homeless people in the Greater London area on 31 March.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities in England report the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 in their quarterly P1 return.

The latest estimate for London appears in table 1 of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act 1985: England. Statistics for the fourth quarter 1992", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mortgages

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what survey he has carried out of the extent to which mortgage lenders do not make loans available on property of a specific type or in a specified area; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No such survey has been carried out by my Department.

Rents to Mortgages

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has taken to prevent properties which are the subject of rent-to-mortgage arrangements being used as collateral for loans.

Sir George Young: Purchasing under rents to mortgages will normally be financed by borrowing and an advance from an approved lending institution to fund the purchase price will take priority over the charge which secures the landlord's share. The purchaser will be free to borrow for other purposes on the security of the property, but such advances will take priority only if the landlord consents. It will be required to consent if the advance is for works to the property or another approved purpose.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the responses he has received to the consultation paper on the future of the rough sleepers initiative.

Sir George Young: Recipients of this discussion paper were not advised that responses would be published and I have no plans to do so. We are considering carefully some 90 responses we have received, and I hope to announce a strategy for the rough sleepers initiative 1993-96 shortly.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were resident in the severe weather shelters at the point of closure; and how many have *(a)* returned to sleeping on the street as a result of the closures and *(b)* been offered accommodation on 31 March.

Sir George Young: Under the Government's £96 million rough sleepers initiative we have provided funding of £1·5 million for this year's winter shelter programme, which at its height provided 400 extra bedspaces in nine winter shelters in central London. The purpose of the winter shelter programme was specifically to provide shelter for people in central London who would otherwise sleep rough over the winter months. The shelters closed, as planned, at the end of March.

At 31 march some 145 of the 400 places were still in use. Around 100 people had other accommodation to move on to and at least 10 people had refused offers of further assistance.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Planning undertook to make these figures available in the *Official Report* during the debate on affordable housing on 1 April.

Housebuilding, London

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the number of *(a)* council houses and *(b)* private houses built in the Greater London area in each of the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates are shown of the total numbers of housebuilding completions by sector in Greater London for 1990 to 1992. Housing associations are now the main providers of new housing for the social sector.

Year	Private enterprise	Housing associations	Local authorities	Total
1990	13,100	2,100	1,900	17,000
1991	10,800	2,500	700	14,000
1992[1]	10,100	3,600	100	13,800

[1] Estimates for 1992 are provisional.

Regional Arts Boards

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list by regional arts board areas the contributions made by each named local authority in England towards Arts Council spending in their areas.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not available centrally.

Council Rented Houses

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present policy of the Government towards the building of local authority rented dwellings.

Mr. Baldry: The provision of new social housing is now mainly the responsibility of housing associations, with local authorities increasingly concentrating on the management of their existing stock and on their broad enabling role.

Sellafield

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many names were on petitions received from the United Kingdom during the public consultation period for the proposed new Sellafield discharge authorisation which were *(a)* in favour of the proposal and *(b)* opposed to the proposal;

(2) how many letters were received during the public consultation period for the proposed new Sellafield discharge authorisation which were *(a)* in favour of the proposal and *(b)* opposed to the proposal; and if he will detail in each case how many were from (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) overseas.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* My Department has received approximately 80,000 responses, including a number of petitions following the public consultation on the proposed new Sellafield discharge authorisation. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have not as yet finished their report on the consultation which provide the details the hon. Member requests. When the report is completed it will be made available to the public. I expect to receive the report by the end of April; this is later than I reported to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 15 February.

Devon Structure Plan

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many months' delay there was in preparing the Devon county structure plan, third alteration; how many months' delay there has been since the public consultation took place because of his Department's uncertainty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The consultation draft of the third alteration to the Devon county structure plan was published in October 1990 and the alteration was formally submitted to the Secretary of State in May 1991. An examination in public of selected matters arising on the alteration took place in March-April 1992. The panel which conducted the examination has since submitted its report and its recommendations are being considered. The report will be made public when the Secretary of State's proposed modifications are published.

Air Quality

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of times the hourly and daily averages of concentrations of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide and ozone in the atmosphere have exceeded the safety thresholds set by EC directives 92/72/EEC, 89/427/EEC, 88/76/EEC, 84/360/EEC and the Air Quality Standards Regulations 1989 in the cities of Belfast, Edinburgh, Cardiff, London, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne, Leicester, Southampton and Kingston upon Hull since January 1991.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* Limits provided in EC air quality directives for smoke and sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide have been breached in the United Kingdom since January 1991 only in the case of smoke and sulphur dioxide in Belfast, for which there was a temporary derogation until 31 March this year. Directive 92/72/EEC sets public information levels rather than limit values, for ozone. Monitoring for ozone in cities other than London is at an early stage, but preliminary tests suggest that the levels specified are not likely to be exceeded in urban centres. EC legislation does not prescribe any limit values or thresholds for ambient concentrations of carbon monoxide.

Environment Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) of 26 March, *Official Report*, columns *737-39*, what votes were taken and what was the position of each country in the European Community's Environment Council on 22 and 23 March.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* No formal votes were taken.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

School Leavers

Mr. Pope: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to promote the use of the records of achievement of school leavers in the recruitment policies *(a)* in his Department and *(b)* in other Government Departments.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Cabinet Office in London, which includes the Office of Public Service and Science, is one of the employers involved in the Central London Education Business Partnership. Students of schools involved in the partnership are able to submit their London records of achievement when applying for jobs. The LRA, together with other information, is taken into account in the selection process.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible for recruitment policy, including educational qualifications, in other Government Departments.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at the Duchy of Lancaster and at the Office of Public Service and Science.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy of Lancaster is an equal opportunities employer. Appointments are made on grounds of merit and of suitability for the post, regardless of an individual's sex or race. There are currently no members of ethnic minorities or disabled people holding senior positions. The Duchy has employed a disabled senior grade in the past.

Recruits to the senior grades of the civil service, as to any grade in the civil service, are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the Civil Service Commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community, including:

extending links with institutions of higher education;
equal opportunities training for all those involved in selection;
using validated selection procedures.

The Office of Public Service and Science is part of the Cabinet Office, which has signed up domestically to Opportunity 2000, and is working towards achieving the civil servicewide benchmark of increasing the proportion of women in the top three grades to 15 per cent. or more by the year 2000. The Department continually seeks to encourage the employment of people from the ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Duchy of Lancaster and the Office of Public Service and Science last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among their employees; when they next plan to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy of Lancaster employs only 37 people. Consequently, it is not necessary to ask employees to declare their ethnic origins, nor to conduct surveys of the number of women employees.

The Office of Public Service and Science is part of the Cabinet Office. A survey of the origins of all non-industrial civil servants was completed in 1988. The Cabinet Office introduced a computerised personnel database in 1991. All staff were given the opportunity to update their own entries, which include sections on ethnic origins. There are no firm plans to conduct further surveys. The sex of employees is identified in staff records.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in the Duchy of Lancaster and in the Office of Public Service and Science are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy employs a total of 37 people, of whom 15—41 per cent.—are women. Of the 37 employees one is registered as a disabled person.

The Office of Public Service and Science forms part of the Cabinet Office. The figures for women employed in the Cabinet Office, including its executive agencies, are as follows:

Grade (and) equivalents)	*Women*	*Total*	*Per cent. Women*
1	0	5	0
2	2	8	25
3	1	25	4
4	0	3	0
5	16	41	39
6	19	45	42
7	63	264	24
Overall	1,330	2,634	50

The ethnic monitoring programme was carried out on a voluntary basis and did not extend to the Cabinet Office's agencies. Of those who responded, 62 people—2·3 per cent. of the total—chose to register as non-white. One of these people is at grade 7 level.

The Cabinet Office's figures on staff with disabilities include only those who have chosen to register as disabled. Twenty-eight people—1 per cent. of the total—are so registered. None is at grade 7 level or above. The Cabinet Office employs other staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

Travellers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the application of the information provisions in the citizens charter to consultation with gipsy communities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter calls on all public services regularly and systematically to seek customers' views about the quality of service provided and priorities for improvements. Consultation should involve all client groups, including, where appropriate, gipsy communities.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster makes appointments to the following non-departmental public bodies included in "Public Bodies 1992": the Civil Service Appeal Board; Agricultural and Food Research Council; Economic and Social Research Council; Medical Research Council; Natural Environment Research Council; Science and Engineering Research Council; and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

In keeping with the provisions of paragraph 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", the Prime Minister is consulted about the appointment of the chairman of the research councils, and about the appointment of the chairman and independent members of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Appointments to the Civil Service Appeal Board do not come within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 and appointments are not required to be submitted to the Prime Minister.

EC Science Funding

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total amount of funding for science research coming to the United Kingdom from European Community sources in each of the last three years for which information is available; and how much of these funds has gone to the research councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: [redacted] information on total funding for science research coming to the United Kingdom from European Community sources is not available in the form requested. I refer the hon. Member to the data given in tables C and D of my answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *300-04*. This gives the total funds awarded to United Kingdom research organisations over the period 1987-91 under the EC framework programme. These funds, which exclude sums relating to fusion and JRC, amounted to £444·62 million—586·90 mecu translated at the rate £1 = 1·32 ecu.

The funding of research council institutes from EC sources in the financial years 1989-90 to 1992-93 is as follows:

	1989-90 *£'000*	*1990-91* *£'000*	*1991-92* *£'000*	*1992-93*[3] *£'000*
SERC	676	1,756	2,018	3,274
NERC	1,641	1,788	2,655	3,109
MRC[1]	700	800	1,500	1,600
AFRC[2]	1,487	1,083	2,724	4,200
ESRC	15	25	25	19
Total	4,519	5,452	8,922	12,202

[1] Excludes awards made directly to MRC units.
[2] Includes AFRC grant-aided institutes.
[3] Provisional.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Portillo: Of the bodies for which the Chancellor is responsible that are listed in "Public Bodies 1992" only appointments to the Top Salaries Review Body require a submission to the Prime Minister.

European Investment Fund

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, columns *631-32*, if he will list projects that are to be financed through the European investment fund and the total level of the loan facilities to be provided.

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom, together with other EC member states, is currently taking forward the administrative and legal procedures necessary to establish the European investment fund. Individual projects will not be put forward for financing until the fund is established. It is envisaged that the EIF will provide guarantees on loans to trans-European networks and to small and medium-sized enterprises within the Community. The total amount of lending which the fund may guarantee is under consideration.

European Monetary Institute

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a decision has been taken on the location of the seat of the European Monetary Institute in accordance with article 13 of the protocol on the European Monetary Institute of the treaty on European union, p188, Cm. 1934; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: No decision has yet been reached as to the location of the seat of the European Monetary Institute, but we continue to press the strong market case for locating both the EMI and the future European central bank in the United Kingdom.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what procedures contract award procedures applied by Government Departments already implementing Council directive 92/50/EEC may be reviewed and challenged.

Mr. Portillo: Government Departments and other public bodies have no obligation to comply with directive 92/50/EEC until it comes into force on 1 July 1993 and equally until then there will be no procedures under which their decisions can be challenged and reviewed.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions for economic growth, inflation and interest rates were built for each year until 1997-98 into his estimates for the public sector borrowing requirement and other economic trends, published at the time of his Budget.

Mr. Portillo: Table 2.2 of the 1993-94 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" provides illustrative assumptions for output, inflation and money GDP growth for each year until 1997-98. These assumptions are set out in the table. It is not our practice to publish assumptions for interest rates.

Table 2.2 Money GDP growth, output growth and inflation[1]

	1992-93	*1993-94*	*1994-95*	*1995-96*	*1996-97*	*1997-98*
Money GDP	3¼	4¼	7	6½	5½	4¼
Real GDP:						
Non-North Sea	−¼	1½	2¼	2¾	3	3
Total	–	2	2½	2¾	2¾	2¾
Inflation:						
GDP deflator	3½	2¾	4¼	3¼	2½	2
RPI excluding MIPs[2]	3¾	3¾	3¾	3¼	2½	2

[1] Percentage changes on previous financial year; forecasts for 1993-94 and assumptions thereafter.
[2] Percentage change in year to 1992q4 1993q4; percentage change on previous financial year thereafter.

VAT

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to charge a positive rate of VAT on a proportion only of each domestic electricity bill based on the proportion of the national electricity consumption generated from fossil fuels.

Sir John Cope: No.

Recruitment Policies

Mr. Pope: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to promote the use of school leavers' records of achievement in the recruitment policies of Government Departments.

Mr. Portillo: As from 4 May, Departments and agencies will be given delegated responsibility for setting recruitment criteria for entrants to all but their senior grades. When the delegation is made, guidance will be issued to encourage the use of individuals' records of achievement as a valuable source of information, both of their academic and vocational qualifications and their attainments in other areas.

Civil Service Relocation

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil service relocations have been agreed *(a)* to Nottingham and *(b)* Leicester, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: Since March 1988 departmental Ministers have announced the following relocations or locations to Nottingham and Leicester:—

Year	*Posts*	*Department*	*Designation*
1988	180	Land Registry	Leicester
	8	OFFER	Nottingham
1989	120	Transport	Nottingham
	1,800	Inland Revenue	Nottingham
1990	125	Inland Revenue	Leicester

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account is being taken on decisions on civil service relocations of the quality of Leicester's transport links and of its need for investment.

Mr. Portillo: The key factors in deciding whether and where to relocate civil service work are achieving best value for money and operational efficiency. Under the Treasury's guidance on relocation of work initiative, Departments considering relocating consult the Department of Trade and Industry about possible locations to ensure that the Government's regional and inner city policies are taken into account.

Business Rents

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tenancies established under business expansion scheme funding contain clauses stating that on the fifth anniversary of the contract of assured tenancy the rent will increase by more than 25 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available.

Finance (No. 2) Bill

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make available to hon. Members the customary notes on the Finance (No. 2) Bill's clauses.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. Notes on clauses are today being placed in the Vote Office and in the Library of the House of Commons.

PRIME MINISTER

Green Minister

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Prime Minister how many times the green Ministers nominated from each Government Department have met as a group during the past year.

The Prime Minister: It is a fundamental principle of our approach to green issues that environmental considerations are taken into account in all policies and at every level. Green Ministers are charged with integrating environmental considerations into the strategy and policies of their own Departments. They have met once in the past year. Mechanisms for co-ordinating policies between Departments include the annual White Paper process and official networks. There is a separate Ministerial Committee on the Environment, EDE, to handle major cross-departmental issues.

Irish Republic

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he plans to make to the Irish Government regarding the present policy in the Irish Republic of bail for terrorists, following the murder of Special Constable Glenn Goodman and the attempted murder of Police Constable Sandy Kelly.

The Prime Minister: We have made clear to the Irish Government the very serious implications of judicial

decisions in extradition cases in which bail has been granted. The Irish Government have informed us that, while decisions on bail applications in individual cases are a matter for the courts, Irish law relating to bail is governed by the provisions of the constitution. We will continue to express our concerns on this subject, with a view to a wider area of discretionary judgment being afforded to the judiciary in such cases, for the greater protection of the public.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of security co-operation with the Irish Republic following the murder of Special Constable Glenn Goodman and the attempted murder of Police Constable Sandy Kelly; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Security co-operation between the RUC and Garda Siochana is at a high level. British and Irish Ministers are determined to maximise the effectiveness of co-operation and will continue to seek ways to enhance it.

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy that all files relevant to the claim for compensation by United Kingdom nuclear test veterans will be released; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Much information about the British nuclear test programme is already in the public domain and further files are being reviewed for possible release in due course. Dose records and medical data on each participant are available to the individual concerned. Successive Governments have confirmed that appropriate safety precautions were taken at the time of the tests to protect the participants from harm.

Service Pensions

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to amend levels of service pensions to take account of the effect of pay restrictions in force from 1976 to 1978.

The Prime Minister: The retired pay or pensions awarded to personnel of the armed forces whose service ended during the period of pay restraint from 1976 to 1978 were calculated in accordance with the rules of the armed forces pension scheme in force at the time. We have no plans to modify the awards that were made.

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister which businesses have been identified for market testing by more than four Government Departments since January 1992; and what percentage of the work force in each Department is *(a)* female, *(b)* part-time and *(c)* clerical or administrative grade.

The Prime Minister: Departments are responsible for their own market testing programmes and definitive information is not held in the form requested. However, the information available centrally indicates that the following broad areas are included in the programmes of more than four Departments.

Accountancy
Estate and Building Management
Information Technology
  Hardware Maintenance
  Software Design and Maintenance
Internal Audit
Legal
  Conveyancing
Library Services
Office Services
Payroll
Record Storage and Retrieval
Recruitment
Reprographic
Security Guarding
Statistical Surveys
Training
Typing

The information on staff numbers cannot be given except at disproportionate cost, but statistics on staff, including breakdowns by gender, grade and department, are contained in "Civil Service Statistics 1992 Edition", published by Her Majesty's Treasury.

Egypt

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he took during his recent discussions with President Mubarak, of Egypt to raise the issue of human rights abuses and curtailment of religious practices among Coptic Christians in Egypt.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* I discussed a wide range of subjects with President Mubarak, including the situtation in Egypt. He is determined to maintain law and order in Egypt in the interests of all Egyptians. The position of the Copts was discussed with the Egyptian Foreign Minister who accompanied President Mubarak.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has made to President Mubarak about the Egyptian authorities' refusal to redress the grievances of the United Kingdom company WENA Hotels.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The Foreign Secretary raised the question of WENA Hotels with the Egyptian Foreign Minister during President Mubarak's recent visit to London, urging the Egyptian authorities to encourage the Egyptian party to the dispute to go to arbitration as soon as possible. Our embassy in Cairo is following this up.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister what recent communications he has received from Dr. Radovan Karadzic regarding the current situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* Dr. Karadzic wrote to me on 31 March about the peace process under the international conference on the former Yugoslavia and about the ban on flights in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is replying to Dr. Karadzic, stressing the urgent need for a peaceful settlement and the importance of the Bosnian Serbs signing the peace package. He is also emphasising the further pressure which will be put on the Serbs if they refuse to sign.

WALES

Environmental Digest for Wales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he plans to take to improve the quality and currency of data in his Department's next Environmental Digest for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The digest is reviewed on an annual basis. The edition published last month contained 18 new tables and four new diagrams with an improved format being adopted for all tables. I shall certainly consider possible additions and improvements to the publication to be produced next year.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many copies of his Department's Environmental Digest for Wales 1992 have been published; at what cost; and what steps have been taken to distribute the digest to interested organisations.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of 430 copies of the latest "Environmental Digest for Wales" have been printed at a cost of £3,800. The cost to the Welsh Office and other organisations of preparing material for inclusion in this publication cannot be identified separately.

Publicity for the digest is arranged through advertisements, brochures, and the issue of a statistical press notice which coincides with the issue of the publication.

Mink Farms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many mink farms are currently licensed in Wales; and in which counties they are located.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

EDUCATION

Further Education

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the cost of publishing and distributing his speech given on 9 December 1992 on further education in its printed form as a leaflet; and how many copies were printed.

Mr. Boswell: Five thousand copies of the leaflet were printed at a cost of £420. The cost of the initial distribution was £144.

Teachers' Pay

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the data from the Secondary School Staffing Survey 1992 showing teachers' pay scales and allowances by length of teaching experience; what assessment his Department has made of the data in respect of updating the conclusions in paragraph 28 of the Statistical Bulletin No. 18/91, in respect of the difference in promotion rates of men and women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The table shows the distribution of full-time secondary school teachers by pay scale and allowance, length of teaching experience and sex. It is derived from the 1992 secondary school staffing survey which covered a representative sample of teachers in maintained secondary schools in England.

The proportion of male full-time secondary teachers paid as heads, deputies or higher allowance holders—D or E—is 37 per cent., compared with 16 per cent. of women. The proportion of men in these posts is therefore 2·3 times greater than the proportion of women; compared with a ratio of 2·6 in 1988. After standardising by length of teaching experience, the ratio becomes 1·9, compared with a standardised ratio of 2·0 in 1988. Excluding those teachers who have taken a career break, by restricting the analysis to those whose age minus their years of teaching experience comes to less than 25, the standardised ratio becomes 1·7, the same as in 1988.

Decisions on promotion to head, deputy head and higher allowance posts are taken by local education authorities and, under LMS, by the governing bodies of schools with delegated budgets. The Department's guides for school governors stress the importance of equal opportunities issues.

The most recent figures for new promotions to head and deputy head show that 35 per cent. of such promotees in the secondary sector were women; since women hold 28 per cent. of existing head and deputy head posts—reflecting previous promotions, going back over several years—the outlook for the future of women in the profession looks more encouraging.

Table 12
Teachers by years of teaching experience[1]

Full-time teachers

	Pay scale									
			Standard scale with allowance							
	Head teacher	*Deputy head teacher*	*E*	*D*	*C*	*B*	*A*	*Standard scale, no allowance*	*Other scales*[2]	*Total*
Total teaching experience:										
Men:										
Less than 1 year	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	14	4	3
1 year	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	8	23	2
2 years	—	—	—	—	—	1	4	7	5	2
3 years	—	—	—	—	—	2	5	6	4	2
4 years	—	—	—	—	1	2	4	4	6	2
5 years	—	—	—	—	1	2	5	4	4	2
6 to 10 years	1	1	2	7	15	17	23	15	13	12
11 to 15 years	3	12	11	18	27	21	23	13	11	18
16 or more years	95	86	87	75	54	55	35	30	30	57
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Head teacher	Deputy head teacher	Pay scale Standard scale with allowance E	D	C	B	A	Standard scale, no allowance	Other scales[1]	Total
All men (thousands)	3·5	6·2	6·5	17·3	10·6	18·9	9·0	18·8	0·4	91·1
Women:										
Less than 1 year	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	—	4
1 year	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	8	33	3
2 years	—	—	—	—	1	1	5	7	14	4
3 years	—	—	—	—	1	2	4	5	9	3
4 years	—	—	1	—	2	3	4	4	12	3
5 years	2	—	—	1	2	4	5	3	5	3
6 to 10 years	—	4	4	12	16	18	19	16	11	16
11 to 15 years	6	12	21	24	30	24	26	20	12	23
16 or more years	92	85	73	64	48	47	35	26	5	41
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
All women (thousands)	0·7	3·0	2·1	7·6	8·1	19·0	14·0	29·4	0·7	84·7
All teachers (thousands)	4·2	9·1	8·5	24·9	18·6	37·9	23·0	48·3	1·2	175·8

[1] Including full and part-time service.
[2] Includes scales for unqualified teachers.
— Less than 0·5.

National Curriculum

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to implement a code of ethics in the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is consulting about his proposal to require schools to include within their prospectus a statement on schools' ethos and values, including details of the way in which they meet their duty to secure the moral, spiritual, social and cultural development of their pupils, through the national curriculum, through religious education, and more generally.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether consultation with a view to making new or revised local management of schools schemes for schools in local education authorities in England which are to undergo a structural reorganisation following the Local Government Commission recommendations will be undertaken before or after such a reorganisation; under which statutory provisions such consultations will take place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: It is too soon to assess the impact of local government reorganisation on LMS; it will differ from area to area, depending on the Local Government Commission's recommendations on structure.

Nursery Education

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest figures his Department has on the number of three and four-year-olds in each London borough; and how many of them are in nursery schools and classes.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is given in the following table.

Estimated 3 and 4 year old population and pupil numbers and participation rates in maintained nursery and primary schools in London at January 1992

	Population estimates[1]	Pupil numbers	Participation rates[2] (percentage)
Camden	4,000	1,012	26
Greenwich	6,600	3,103	47
Hackney	6,200	2,212	36
Hammersmith and Fulham	3,600	1,509	42
Islington	4,700	1,797	38
Kensington and Chelsea	2,800	826	29
Lambeth	7,400	2,294	31
Lewisham	6,900	2,569	37
Southwark	6,900	2,707	39
Tower Hamlets	6,100	2,687	44
Wandsworth	6,000	2,211	37
Westminster[3]	3,400	1,078	31
Barking and Dagenham	4,400	1,750	40
Barnet	8,000	2,351	29
Bexley	6,000	1,127	19
Brent	6,800	2,390	35
Bromley	7,200	154	2
Croydon	8,800	1,159	13
Ealing	7,600	3,246	43
Enfield	7,200	1,484	21
Haringey	5,900	2,546	43
Harrow	5,500	958	17
Havering	6,000	247	4
Hillingdon	6,500	3,150	48
Hounslow	5,900	2,469	42
Kingston upon Thames	3,300	1,173	35
Merton	4,500	2,593	57
Newham	7,700	4,445	58
Redbridge	6,000	987	16
Richmond upon Thames	4,000	706	18
Sutton	4,700	1,684	36
Waltham Forest	6,200	2,502	40
Greater London	186,700	61,126	33

[1] Rounded to the nearest 100.
[2] Calculated on unrounded population estimates.
[3] Includes City LEA.

National Curriculum English Order

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will publish proposals for a new National Curriculum English Order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: With my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I am publishing tomorrow proposals for a revised English curriculum, as the basis for extensive consultation. They are based on the recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study made in the report of the National Curriculum Council, which will be published with the proposals.

As required by the Education Reform Act, I am asking the National Curriculum Council to conduct the consultation exercise in England. The schools, education authorities, professional organisations and other bodies consulted will have until 30 July 1993 to submit their views and make representations to the NCC. A parallel consultation will take place in Wales. Subject to further advice from the NCC and the Curriculum Council for Wales, my right hon. Friend and I will then publish in November a draft order for further consultation.

Copies of the report, the proposals, and my letter to the chairman of the NCC will be placed in the Library of the House.

Education Staff

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local education authority in England *(a)* the number of teachers employed and *(b)* the number of non-teaching staff employed; and if he will express each figure as a percentage of the total staff of each local education authority.

Mr. Boswell: The first column of the table shows the full-time equivalent number of teaching staff employed in the LEA-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in England at January 1992. The second column shows the number of full-time equivalent education support, administrative and clerical staff employed in LEA-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England at January 1992. Information for other types of non-teaching staff, such as school meals or premises-related staff or LEA central administrative staff, is not centrally recorded. It is therefore not possible to express the figures in the table as a percentage of total staff in the schools sector.

Full-time equivalent numbers of teachers, education support staff and administration/clerical staff in LEA-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in each LEA in England, January 1992

	Teachers	*Education support and administration/ clerical staff*
City	11	4
Camden	1,299	279
Greenwich	2,234	464
Hackney	1,604	402
Hammersmith	950	233
Islington	1,338	360
Kensington and Chelsea	753	184
Lambeth	1,502	418
Lewisham	1,411	320
Southwark	1,661	457
Tower Hamlets	2,063	523
Wandsworth	1,544	481
Westminster	1,147	305
Barking	1,322	302
Barnet	2,456	502
Bexley	1,711	268
Brent	1,967	364
Bromley	1,554	255
Croydon	2,436	487
Ealing	2,143	558
Enfield	2,292	423
Haringey	1,605	462
Harrow	1,570	348
Havering	2,049	344
Hillingdon	1,348	405
Hounslow	1,891	444
Kingston upon Thames	988	219
Merton	1,268	261
Newham	1,994	489
Redbridge	1,796	297
Richmond upon Thames	1,135	187
Sutton	1,147	219
Waltham Forest	1,909	377
Birmingham	9,031	1,728
Coventry	2,795	630
Dudley	2,738	423
Sandwell	2,870	620
Solihull	1,795	381
Walsall	2,619	615
Wolverhampton	2,514	496
Knowsley	1,398	325
Liverpool	4,152	712
St. Helens	1,656	286
Sefton	2,479	442
Wirral	2,924	408
Bolton	2,446	417
Bury	1,461	268
Manchester	3,974	899
Oldham	2,253	402
Rochdale	1,987	353
Salford	2,052	487
Stockport	2,332	521
Tameside	2,037	404
Trafford	1,611	226
Wigan	3,015	381
Barnsley	1,714	414
Doncaster	2,691	506
Rotherham	2,464	431
Sheffield	3,937	813
Bradford	5,027	1,346
Calderdale	1,717	390
Kirklees	3,519	653
Leeds	6,300	1,490
Wakefield	2,748	589
Gateshead	1,731	279
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,285	493
North Tyneside	1,768	357
South Tyneside	1,385	203
Sunderland	2,692	502
Isles of Scilly	27	6
Avon	7,900	1,721
Bedfordshire	4,908	1,119
Berkshire	5,532	1,224
Buckinghamshire	4,756	1,252
Cambridgeshire	5,409	1,483
Cheshire	7,934	1,551
Cleveland	5,546	994
Cornwall	3,697	947
Cumbria	4,052	788
Derbyshire	7,771	1,677
Devon	7,044	1,720
Dorset	4,343	803
Durham	5,007	967
East Sussex	4,673	931
Essex	12,047	2,335
Gloucestershire	3,856	790
Hampshire	11,403	2,793

	Teachers	Education support and administration/ clerical staff
Hereford and Worcester	5,451	771
Hertfordshire	7,850	1,794
Humberside	7,676	1,592
Isle of Wight	1,021	267
Kent	10,896	2,048
Lancashire	11,509	1,978
Leicestershire	7,807	1,723
Lincolnshire	4,270	803
Norfolk	5,585	1,067
North Yorkshire	5,803	943
Northamptonshire	5,236	984
Northumberland	2,791	487
Nottinghamshire	8,530	1,691
Oxfordshire	4,150	1,120
Shropshire	3,681	743
Somerset	3,524	952
Staffordshire	8,798	1,726
Suffolk	5,277	1,021
Surrey	6,235	1,502
Warwickshire	3,816	713
West Sussex	5,210	1,214
Wiltshire	4,525	927
England	387,753	80,699

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the statutory provisions governing the position of parents whose children do not attend school because they are permanently excluded.

Mr. Forth: Under section 36 of the Education Act 1944, parents of children of compulsory school age are responsible for ensuring that they receive education, whether by attendance at school or otherwise. The fact that a pupil has been permanently excluded does not release parents from this obligation. Failure to comply can lead to prosecution under section 40 of the 1944 Act. Early application should therefore be made to a neighbouring school or, if necessary, arrangements made for the child to be educated otherwise than at school, for example, in a unit. The Government have announced their intention to place local education authorities under a duty to provide education otherwise than at school where necessary to meet a pupil's individual needs: amendments to the Education Bill will be tabled shortly.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Boswell: There have been no certificates issued by this Department under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 since 1987.

Medical Students

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will require medical schools to publish the number of applicants each year to medical school by ethnic origin and sex and the number who are eventually successful in their application.

Mr. Boswell: We have no plans to require medical schools to publish this information.

Education Expenditure

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local education authority, in the last year for which figures are available, *(a)* the budgeted expenditure and *(b)* the standard spending assessment for (i) under-fives, (ii) five to 11, (iii) 11 to 16 and (iv) post-16 education.

Mr. Forth: Reliable information on local education authorities' budgeted expenditure is available nationally only at the level of their overall education budgets and is taken from their own returns to the Department of the Environment. For the purpose of determining standard spending assessments, the education component of standard spending, net of specific grants, is divided into five sub-blocks—under fives, 5-10, 11-15, 16+, and other education. The figures for local authorities' education budgets for 1992-93, together with the figures for their overall education standard spending assessments, are set out in the table.

For several reasons, it is necessary to be cautious when drawing conclusions from the figures. First, the budget figures were provided at the beginning of the 1992-93 financial year. Outturn expenditure may well be different. Local education authorities may also not recognise the budget figures because their budget returns have been adjusted by the Department of the Environment to make them comparable with their education standard spending assessments. Secondly, the standard spending assessment system is a mechanism for distributing grant between authorities. Because authorities have discretion to decide their own spending priorities between and within services, the sub-blocks are in no sense spending targets. Thirdly, the sub-blocks notionally include provision for children in the relevant age groups in special schools, related central services and related functions such as home to school transport which do not have to be delegated to schools. Therefore, they are not comparable with the budgets of primary or secondary schools.

Education SSAs and Education Budget Figures for 1992-93

£ million

LEA	Primary	Secondary	Post 16	Under 5s	Others	Total	Budget
City of London	0·10	0·07	0·38	0·01	0·09	0·65	2·12
Camden	21·47	20·14	12·23	5·17	5·90	64·92	70·04
Greenwich	38·87	40·73	15·55	6·51	5·80	107·46	105·98
Hackney	39·53	38·59	21·99	9·81	7·47	117·39	112·93
Hammersmith	18·18	18·28	11·58	4·75	4·97	57·75	61·19
Islington	29·05	28·97	15·94	6·42	6·08	86·45	85·07
Kensington	11·05	11·25	7·57	4·00	4·46	38·33	47·22
Lambeth	48·46	42·82	27·32	11·32	9·48	139·39	132·04
Lewisham	40·91	38·66	19·70	7·80	7·00	114·07	112·63

LEA	Primary	Secondary	Post 16	Under 5s	Others	Total	Budget
Southwark	41·39	37·85	16·15	9·23	7·74	112·36	103·23
Tower Hamlet	46·75	44·38	17·16	8·77	6·64	123·69	118·55
Wandsworth	32·76	32·30	19·23	8·02	8·31	100·62	105·83
Westminster	16·46	16·15	11·98	5·23	6·10	55·93	77·25
Barking	23·26	23·85	7·76	3·48	3·19	61·55	66·26
Barnet	36·67	38·61	24·45	6·68	6·89	113·29	110·16
Bexley	29·82	34·02	14·69	4·03	3·99	86·54	77·33
Brent	43·42	44·13	30·02	8·70	7·95	134·22	125·90
Bromley	32·47	35·66	19·39	4·73	5·36	97·61	93·29
Croydon	43·75	44·63	26·29	7·53	7·21	129·40	132·56
Ealing	44·03	43·94	26·72	8·08	8·04	130·81	122·72
Enfield	37·99	42·06	21·70	6·01	5·93	113·70	115·86
Haringey	33·85	34·43	21·59	7·47	6·46	103·80	96·20
Harrow	26·93	28·60	16·41	4·05	3·90	79·91	80·81
Havering	30·19	36·62	15·01	3·55	3·81	89·17	89·57
Hillingdon	30·72	33·01	15·45	4·55	4·38	88·11	87·97
Hounslow	31·18	33·01	16·34	5·11	4·61	90·25	86·55
Kingston	14·83	16·53	9·85	2·36	2·61	46·18	50·16
Merton	19·87	20·47	11·67	3·71	3·59	59·31	61·47
Newham	49·44	46·31	21·90	9·04	6·51	133·21	111·28
Redbridge	30·60	35·05	17·33	4·58	4·88	92·45	90·02
Richmond	14·97	14·18	9·08	2·90	3·23	44·36	44·56
Sutton	20·97	23·10	11·21	2·98	3·05	61·32	55·39
Waltham Forest	36·12	37·75	18·53	6·62	5·84	104·85	100·55
Birmingham	174·58	178·42	79·70	28·06	24·39	485·14	428·05
Coventry	43·89	44·42	21·57	6·82	6·28	122·99	132·46
Dudley	37·75	42·52	18·76	4·66	5·06	108·75	117·67
Sandwell	43·64	46·99	21·89	6·54	6·25	125·30	128·19
Solihull	24·78	27·61	13·49	3·04	3·35	72·26	73·29
Walsall	37·84	41·73	17·49	5·12	4·99	107·18	106·39
Wolverhampton	38·31	42·37	18·15	6·00	5·82	110·65	112·80
Knowsley	29·15	29·65	12·06	4·35	3·68	78·89	74·56
Liverpool	76·55	77·94	37·10	12·23	11·15	214·97	206·93
St· Helens	23·58	28·57	15·13	2·89	3·17	73·34	76·65
Sefton	37·50	40·93	21·64	5·01	5·37	110·45	110·25
Wirral	46·72	51·49	24·08	6·67	6·71	135·67	132·23
Bolton	37·98	40·23	17·04	5·38	5·02	105·65	105·87
Bury	22·57	23·62	11·98	2·91	2·84	63·93	68·74
Manchester	74·88	70·43	33·30	13·29	11·76	203·67	198·76
Oldham	34·61	36·59	13·75	4·75	4·38	94·07	95·63
Rochdale	31·50	33·38	13·36	4·36	3·86	86·46	84·40
Salford	30·75	31·49	17·69	4·77	4·63	89·33	87·54
Stockport	33·87	36·63	20·40	4·34	4·59	99·82	105·97
Tameside	30·28	32·55	14·38	4·18	3·98	85·35	82·69
Trafford	26·79	28·21	15·21	3·60	3·77	77·58	78·55
Wigan	40·48	44·88	21·41	4·91	4·96	116·64	124·23
Barnsley	29·27	31·87	11·99	3·68	3·86	80·67	77·08
Doncaster	43·03	46·98	18·17	5·52	5·36	119·05	121·43
Rotherham	35·54	40·22	16·46	4·65	4·53	101·40	104·55
Sheffield	60·79	68·25	32·90	8·81	10·04	180·80	190·79
Bradford	81·83	85·64	32·02	12·14	10·22	221·85	213·28
Calderdale	27·02	29·84	13·17	3·64	3·58	77·24	77·61
Kirklees	55·00	59·35	28·74	7·35	7·20	157·65	153·04
Leeds	90·63	99·48	45·32	13·14	13·38	261·96	267·68
Wakefield	41·53	44·53	17·69	5·38	5·40	114·54	120·62
Gateshead	25·70	28·81	10·77	3·55	3·95	72·77	80·07
Newcastle	35·59	36·42	15·97	5·60	5·84	99·42	104·88
North Tyne	25·38	28·13	13·26	3·33	3·58	73·66	75·25
South Tyne	21·67	23·25	9·61	2·98	3·03	60·54	63·62
Sunderland	42·72	47·52	17·02	5·65	5·46	118·37	113·41
Isles of Scilly	0·46	0·52	0·23	0·04	0·05	1·30	1·36
Avon	109·54	119·11	56·26	14·59	15·74	315·24	350·59
Bedfordshire	78·75	84·39	39·16	10·67	9·74	222·71	220·25
Berkshire	97·85	107·10	55·63	13·65	12·91	287·14	272·03
Buckinghamshire	86·53	101·97	50·56	10·63	10·27	259·97	255·58
Cambridge	85·08	92·56	44·10	10·33	10·14	242·20	249·28
Cheshire	121·92	137·84	70·54	14·34	14·72	359·37	370·99
Cleveland	90·06	96·83	37·94	11·94	11·05	247·82	253·42
Cornwall	59·35	67·86	34·30	6·50	7·41	175·42	170·01
Cumbria	60·82	69·21	29·24	6·54	7·54	173·35	183·70
Derbyshire	113·98	130·19	57·68	13·55	14·45	329·86	370·13
Devon	117·43	132·59	62·28	14·25	16·56	343·10	347·72
Dorset	67·40	77·73	36·34	8·25	10·40	200·12	203·35
Durham	80·13	89·11	35·10	9·41	10·20	223·95	234·13
East Sussex	74·41	79·40	40·43	10·21	12·52	216·96	224·66
Essex	196·38	232·81	102·76	23·91	24·94	580·81	557·99
Gloucestershire	62·19	70·31	35·23	7·57	8·10	183·41	192·54
Hampshire	193·50	209·81	109·32	24·83	25·18	562·64	576·19

LEA	Primary	Secondary	Post 16	Under 5s	Others	Total	Budget
Hereford and Worcester	81·89	93·97	46·71	9·32	9·99	241·88	241·87
Hertfordshire	124·08	142·39	71·61	15·80	16·30	370·18	383·25
Humberside	119·39	136·33	55·27	15·20	15·12	341·30	361·53
Isle of Wight	15·39	18·00	10·13	1·76	2·26	47·54	46·24
Kent	192·77	225·97	100·21	24·14	25·05	568·13	539·75
Lancashire	191·44	20·22	102·65	24·92	25·01	553·25	563·79
Leicestershire	120·51	130·40	62·22	15·86	15·49	344·49	361·69
Lincolnshire	73·56	89·15	41·99	8·05	9·22	221·98	219·32
Norfolk	88·29	103·64	46·83	10·04	11·81	260·61	261·97
North Yorkshire	81·31	92·43	50·54	9·02	10·54	243·84	252·93
Northamptonshire	78·25	88·34	38·49	9·55	9·17	223·80	225·98
Northumberland	39·04	45·98	17·80	3·99	4·58	111·40	119·79
Nottinghamshire	132·00	146·38	68·43	17·96	18·65	383·42	402·22
Oxfordshire	66·18	68·80	34·76	8·83	8·95	187·52	201·34
Shropshire	52·38	61·35	28·19	5·89	6·21	154·01	164·61
Somerset	54·20	61·35	30·70	6·17	6·81	159·23	172·71
Staffordshire	132·41	146·45	64·11	15·61	16·05	374·64	380·42
Suffolk	73·97	84·98	37·60	9·42	9·29	215·27	229·66
Surrey	105·58	117·17	73·17	14·61	16·01	326·54	327·78
Warwickshire	57·98	66·23	34·43	6·72	7·41	172·77	182·07
West Sussex	78·19	90·17	47·25	9·36	11·07	236·04	225·49
Wiltshire	70·36	77·57	37·49	8·57	8·46	202·44	210·12

Notes:

1. Information on budgeted expenditure is taken from Local Authorities' returns to the Department of Environment on forms RA92/93 and RA(SG)92/93. Figures have been repriced to outturn.
2. The education budgets for Inner London authorities have been adjusted to take account of the education grant for Inner London authorities, and make them comparable with education SSAs. Inner London education grants are paid to provide, through the support of expenditure on education, transitional help to local tax-payers in Inner London boroughs and in the City of London where the authorities inherited responsibility for the education service from the Inner London Education Authority.
3. Figures have been rounded to two decimal places.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Boswell: Five of the appointments listed in "Public Bodies 1992" required clearance with the Prime Minister.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in England.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992 the pupil:teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in England were 22·2:1 and 15·8:1 respectively.

Truancy

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the latest figures for truancy; and if he will make a statement on measures to reduce its incidence.

Mr. Forth: Truancy data will be published in local school performance tables for the first time this autumn. We will then have a clearer understanding of the levels of truancy nationally. My right hon. Friend looks to schools to make maximising attendance one of their key tasks. Unauthorised absences should be pursued with vigour, bringing in LEA education welfare officers as appropriate. A major boost to the fight against truancy has been given by the Government's new reducing truancy initiative under the grants for education support and training scheme for 1993-94. Projects to a total value of some £9 million are being supported in over 70 LEAs.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools within Greater London have opted out of local authority control; and how many have applications being considered by his Department.

Mr. Forth: A total of 86 schools in Greater London are operating as self-governing (GM) state schools. My right hon. Friend has indicated that he is minded to approve a further two schools for GM status. Applications from 26 Greater London schools are under consideration in the Department.

Special Needs Education

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students at teacher training colleges are on courses which include training for special needs education.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend's criteria for the approval of teacher training courses require that by the end of their courses all students should have developed the capacity to identify pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties. They should also have an understanding of the ways in which such pupils' potential can be developed.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Services

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the regional services organised by his Department.

Mr. Leigh: One of the Department's objectives is to ensure that its policies respond to the needs of different regions and areas with special difficulties. It has, to this

end, a network of eight regional offices which are responsible for delivering a wide range of business support schemes and other activities, including work in support of inward investment, the application of European structural funds, action for cities and liaison with business support organisations for small firms. The regional offices are also the Department's main channel of communication with business, monitoring business developments and helping to shape the Department's policies for business. Their work is subject to regular monitoring against targets, ensuring that they contribute effectively to the Department's objectives. Performance targets for the delivery of the main business support schemes are published in accordance with citizens charter principles.

Direct Selling

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in how many instances trading standards officers took action through the Department of Trade and Industry to enforce the regulations regarding direct selling.

Mr. Leigh: Trading standards officers have no enforcement powers under part XI of the Fair Trading Act 1973. Nevertheless trading standards officers around the country regularly draw the Department's attention to schemes that may be in breach of the legislation.

European Community (Contracts)

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress made in the enforcement of the opening up of public contracts in the EC.

Mr. Needham: Enforcement of the EC rules on procurement in the public and utilities sector is largely a matter for the EC suppliers and contractors who benefit from the directives. There are associated directives which require member states to establish review systems under which suppliers can seek legal remedies if harmed or at risk of harm by a breach of EC law. The associated directives also require member states to provide information in case of clear and manifest infringement of the EC rules so that the Commission can consider whether to bring proceedings against the member states under article 169/EEC. The implementation of the directives is monitored closely by the Commission. In the United Kingdom, the EC rules on the procurement of supplies and works and the associated provisions on remedies have been given effect in SI 91/2679, SI 91/2680 and SI 92/3279.

Employees (Religious Affiliation)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the Post Office.

Mr. Leigh: The Post Office is unable to disaggregate the costs of monitoring the religious affiliations of its employees in Northern Ireland from the overall costs of complying with the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from British companies involved in aerospace and aero engines concerning future Government support for the development of leading edge materials technologies.

Mr. Heseltine: My officials are constantly in touch with the aerospace and aeroengine companies in the United Kingdom, discussing a wide range of issues, including future Government support through the Department's civil aircraft research and demonstration programme. My Department is grant-funding essential pre-competitive work in advanced materials technology, both in metallics and non-metallics, for the aeroengine and airframe manufacturers.

Business Development, Greater London

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he intends to take to support and encourage the small business sector in the Greater London area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department provides substantial help to small businesses in London through the overseas trade services, consultancy initiative and technology support available through the south-east regional office. The small firms loan guarantee scheme is available throughout London. In 1993-94 my Department will be providing financial support through the training and enterprise councils in London for a wide range of information, advice and other support to small firms.

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of inward investment for industrial development in the Greater London area in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The information cannot be provided in the form requested by the hon. Gentleman. I will write to him.

Strategic Technology

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department received the national strategic technology acquisition plan prepared by his Department's aviation committee; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The national strategic technology acquisition plan for aeronautics was formally presented to my Department on 4 November 1992.

Postal Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he proposes to ask the European Commission to consult the public and the European Parliament on any postal services directive under article 100(a) of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* Directives issued by the European Commission under article 100(a) of the treaty of Rome are subject to consultation with the European Parliament. There is also a consultation process with interested parties during the negotiation period of such directives and before their implementation.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy on whether direct mail should be part of the European Community's postal service obligation.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The Government are of the view that direct mail should be encompassed within the definition of a universal service obligation.

TRANSPORT

Railway Investment

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will show for each year since 1963 the level of railway investment, excluding track renewals, expressed in 1991-92 prices.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for expenditure on railway investment excluding track renewals are shown in the following table.

Year	*£ million 1991-92 prices*
1963	745
1964	821
1965	863
1966	729
1967	565
1968	488
1969	309
1970	352
1971	399
1972	458
1973	473
1974	526
1975	639
1976	621
1977	595
1978	579
1979	635
1980	618
1981	497
1982	430
1983	442
1984-85	558
1985-86	584
1986-87	546
1987-88	626
1988-89	680
1989-90	812
1990-91	765
1991-92	869

Search and Rescue

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer of 31 March, if he will list the areas within his responsibility not covered by the SAR coverage proposals in *(a)* day time and *(b)* night time; and if he will set out the steps he intends to take to improve cover.

Mr. Norris: The helicopter criteria for day time and night time coverage is set out in the defence open government document on the "Future Provision of Royal Air Force Search and Rescue Helicopters", annexes A to D, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. The Department of Transport has no plans to change its contribution to SAR helicopter coverage.

Road Traffic, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the level of road traffic flows in London in each year to 2010; what are the methods of calculation; and if he will separately identify the flows for private cars.

Mr. Norris: The Department has not made estimates of road traffic flows for each year for 2010. However, recent trends indicate that car traffic and hence all motor traffic could grow by less than 1 per cent. per annum in the central area and by between 1 and 2 per cent. per annum in other parts of London.

Travelcard

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of all bus, rail and underground journeys within London are made using the travelcard; if he will list all three both in figures and as a percentage; how many of all bus, rail and underground journeys are made by concessionary fares in London and how many of all bus journeys are made using bus passes.

Mr. Norris: Estimates provided by London Transport and by British Rail for 1992-93 are:

Type of ticket	*Bus*		*Underground*		*British Rail*	
	Journeys (millions)	*Per cent.*	*Journeys (millions)*	*Per cent.*	*Journeys (millions)*	*Per cent.*
Travelcard	334	30	533	72	245	55
Bus Pass	203	18	—	—	—	—
Concessionary Fares	252	22	28	4	2	0·5

Notes:

1. The British Rail figures cover 1 March 1992 to 27 February 1993: they include all journeys in the Network SouthEast area; separate figures for journeys within London are not available.
2. The figures for concessionary fares are for the local authorities' concessionary fares scheme.

Road Transport, London

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to speed up road transport in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Government policies for road traffic in London are not designed to increase traffic speeds significantly but rather to ease congestion so that traffic moves freely and safely, with more reliable journey times. These policies include the development of priority, red, routes, improved traffic control systems, the use of cameras to monitor speed and red light offences, stricter

parking enforcement, and road improvements to remove bottlenecks, facilitate orbital movement and provide access to docklands and east London.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road improvement and new road building schemes are currently being undertaken in Greater London; what is their cost; and if he will list them.

Mr. Norris: The following major road improvement schemes on trunk roads for which the Secretary of State is responsible are being undertaken currently in the Greater London area.

		£ million
A406	Hangar Lane to Harrow Road	116·60
A40	Long Lane Junction Improvement	43·75

A further £9·5 million has been spent during the financial year 1992-93 on a rolling programme of minor trunk roads scheme. Local authorities in London were provided with transport supplementary grant support of £51 million cash grant towards their schemes. Their programme for 1992-93 included the following major schemes. Each scheme has a total cost in excess of £1 million, and grant is 50 per cent. of accepted expenditure.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what road improvement and new road building schemes are planned in London for the next financial year; what is their cost; and if he will list them.

Mr. Norris: The following major road improvement schemes on trunk roads for which the Secretary of State is responsible are due to start work in the 1993-94 financial year.

		£ million
A406	East of Falloden Way to Finchley High Road	42
A406	Dysons Road/Hall Lane	63
A406	M1 Junction 1 Improvement	5
A13	West of Heathway to Thames Avenue	54
A13	Thames Avenue to Wennington	58
A13	Blackwall Tunnel/Cotton Street	8
A13	Butcher Row Junction	1
A12	Hackney—M11 Contract 2	62
A12	Hackney—M11 Contract 4	60
A40	Long Lane to West End Road	4

There is further rolling programme of minor trunk road schemes costing about £12 million. In addition, there is a transport supplementary programme of about £150 million of local authority schemes.

In addition to continuing work on schemes started in earlier years, the following schemes are due to start in 1993-94.

New TSG Major Schemes Accepted for 1993-94

Authority	*Scheme*	*Total Cost £000*
Croydon	A232 Chepstow Road/Fairfield Road/ Barclay Road	6,100
Hillingdon	A437 Bournes Bridge Hayes	1,150
Hounslow	A315 Hounslow Town Centre Urban Relief Road	8,247
Merton	A219 Wimbledon Town Centre/ Alexandra Road Junction Improvement	5,775
Newham	A11 Stratford Gyratory Modifications	1,500
Waltham Forest	A503 Forest Road/Blackhorse Road Junction	1,100

Public Service Vehicle Test

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department holds disaggregated by individual operator for the annual PSV test conducted at his Department's testing stations.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The testing of both heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles is conducted by the vehicle inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State. The inspectorate keeps a database on individual vehicle test histories. While the operator of each vehicle is normally included in each test history file, as the test applicant, this information is not, at present, cross-referenced to provide PSV test data for individual operators. Individual test results are released by VI only to other enforcement bodies or the owner of the vehicle.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will relocate the sign board on the M4 on the eastern side of the Severn bridge welcoming motorists to England to its correct geographical position.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have no proposals to move the sign.

The sign is located immediately to the east of the toll plaza. This is the first place where it can be safely and practically sited on the English side of the border.

London Commuter Services

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has undertaken on the effect of international rail services on London's commuter services; and if he will publish them.

Mr. Freeman: No such studies have been undertaken by the Department of Transport as international rail services are a matter for British Rail. British Rail gave an assurance to Parliament during the passage of the Channel Tunnel Act that commuter services would not be adversely affected by the introduction of international trains. British Rail has every intention of standing by that assurance.

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department issued a licence for the use of truck cargo heavy duty II vehicles by the Ministry of Defence to transport nuclear materials under the International Atomic Energy Agency Safety Series No. 6 Regulations 1985, as amended in 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such licence is required.

London Buses

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passenger journeys were made on London Buses Ltd. for each year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: The available information is shown in the table. The figures for London Buses Ltd. exclude passengers carried on tendered services, as this information is not readily available. Figures for London Transport bus services comprise all services operated by London Buses Ltd., tendered and non-tendered, together with tendered routes operated by other companies.

Passenger journeys

Millions

	London Buses Ltd. (non-tendered services)	*London Transport bus services*
1979	1,234	1,234
1980	1,183	1,183
1981	1,079	1,079
1982	1,039	1,039
1983	1,089	1,089
1984-85[1]	1,153	1,153
1985-86	1,139	1,146
1986-87	1,094	1,158
1987-88	1,072	1,211
1988-89	985	1,206
1989-90	920	1,183
1990-91	846	1,180
1991-92	745	1,149

[1] Since 1985-86 London Transport have put an increasing number of routes in their bus network out to tender.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of London buses are beyond their current design life; and how many will be beyond their design life by 1996.

Mr. Norris: Some 13 per cent. of London Buses Ltd.'s vehicles are currently beyond their original design life. The majority of these are the popular Routemaster vehicles, with an average age of 28 years. There is a refurbishment programme under way to extend the life of 500 Routemaster vehicles into the next century at a cost of £10 million. All vehicles are regularly maintained to ensure their reliability and continued safe operation. It is not possible to forecast the position for 1996.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much bus mileage the managing directors of London Buses Ltd. subsidiaries expect to be lost as a result of his Department's proposals for deregulation; and what efforts he has made to maintain the current level of mileage.

Mr. Norris: It is not for me to comment on the views of the managing directors of the subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd.

Upon deregulation we shall establish a central bus authority to ensure that routes which are socially necessary but which are not operated commercially are provided on a subsidised basis. As a guide, deregulation outside London has led to an increase of 20 per cent. in bus mileage.

Thames (Transport Potential)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Government's planned working party to explore the Thames transport potential expects to hold its first meeting; if he will name its members; and when it expects to make its first report.

Mr. Norris: I am planning to hold the first meeting of the working group next month. In addition to officials from my Department and the Department of the Environment, the working group will comprise Mr. David Jeffrey, chief executive of the Port of London Authority, Mr. Dick Barker representing London First, Mr. Eric Sorensen, chief executive of the London Docklands development corporation, Mr. Robin Clement of the London Planning Advisory Committee and Mr. David Bayliss of London Transport. I hope to publish a report towards the end of 1993.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement updating his proposals for the Vehicle Inspectorate.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 10 February, *Official Report*, column 659.

Bus Engines

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what fiscal incentives are planned for the bus industry following deregulation to encourage investment in new, cleaner engines.

Mr. Norris: Fiscal incentives are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider. Large diesel engines of the type fitted to London buses will have to conform with the requirements of EC directive 91/542/EEC in respect of emissions, the first stage of which came into force in July 1992.

Development Control Guidance

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library details of all transport considerations in development control guidance notes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Development control guidance notes include in them relevant transport considerations. Copies of such notes are placed in the Library of the House.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Norris: Appointments of chairmen of the three nationalised industries listed on page 70 of "Public Bodies 1992"—British Rail, the Civil Aviation Authority and London Transport—came within the category set out in paragraph 50(ii)(a) of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required submissions to the Prime Minister. None of the other appointments listed came within categories requiring a submission to the Prime Minister.

Thames Crossing

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what considerations have been taken into account by his Department on the need for the east London river crossing, in the light of his Department's proposals for a further Thames crossing between Poplar and Greenwich;

(2) what bodies have already been consulted by his Department over proposals for the further Thames crossing between Poplar and Greenwich;

(3) when the consultants employed by his Department to look at the proposed Thames crossing between Poplar and Greenwich are expected to report; and when the proposals will go out to public consultation.

Mr. Norris: The Department's consultants have reported on their study into a third crossing of the River Thames at Blackwall. The Department has since consulted on an informal basis the London boroughs of Greenwich and of Tower Hamlets and the London Docklands development corporation about the study's findings. It has had similar informal consultation with British Gas because of its wide-ranging Port Greenwich development proposals on its lands at Blackwall peninsula. A public consultation exercise is planned for later next month, and detailed arrangements will be announced shortly.

The need for the east London river crossing, fully debated at public inquiries in 1985-86, is not diminished by the possibility of a third crossing at Blackwall. It is required to provide a missing strategic link in the trunk road system by completing the extension of the North Circular road from the A13 to the A2.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods vehicle drivers have been killed in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There were 55 heavy goods vehicle drivers killed in personal injury road accidents in 1990 and 50 were killed in 1991. A figure for 1992 is not available yet.

MOT Diesel Smoke Test

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the introduction of the MOT diesel smoke test.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There has been much support for emissions checking during roadworthiness tests, although there has been concern that the diesel smoke test can cause damage to engines which have not been properly maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. That is why we have temporarily suspended the test.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether all examiners and testers authorised for the purpose of carrying out MOT tests on diesel-powered cars will be required to have access to on-site diesel smoke meters.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Yes.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which individuals and organisations he consulted when drawing up smoke meter specifications and test procedures for use in the MOT diesel smoke test; and what was their response.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department consulted representatives of the vehicle and equipment manufacturers about the smoke meter specification and a much wider group of organisations about the test procedure, including representatives of vehicle users and operators, local authority associations, the garage trade and environmental groups. The response to consultation on the smoke meter specification was of a technical nature. Respondents to the proposal to introduce the check, and the associated test procedure, supported this environmental initiative although some concern was expressed about a slight risk of engine damage, which was reflected by the Department in advice to MOT testing stations on how to minimise the risk.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 16 February to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, North (Ms Walley), *Official Report*, column *151*, when he hopes to reinstate MOT diesel smoke tests by meter.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Department is currently investigating reports that the smoke test has caused damage to some engines and, although it would be premature to give a firm date, I hope that the test can be reinstated later in the year.

Passenger Rail Services (Finance)

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the franchise director will have responsibility from 1 April 1994 for making grants out of the public service obligation to all passenger rail services; and what assessment he has made out of the implications for British Rail of that transfer of responsibility.

Mr. Freeman: The Government intend that the franchising director should from 1 April 1994 assume responsibility for all subsidy to rail passenger services in Great Britain including those which continue to be provided by British Rail. We are discussing the details of implementation with the board and the franchising director-designate.

Air Transport Operators' Licences

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the travel companies which failed to renew their ATOL licence by 5 pm on 31 March; and what steps he has taken to protect holidaymakers from the consequences of this.

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority, which administers the air travel organisers' licence, ATOL, system, carries out an annual review of all ATOL holders. Details of travel organisers which did not have their ATOL renewed by 31 March 1993 are given in the lists, which were published by the CAA on 1 April. The lists cover travel organisers which have applied for renewal but which had not then fulfilled the necessary conditions and those which have not applied for renewal.

Inclusion in the list of travel organisers which have applied for their licences to be renewed does not necessarily mean that the CAA has doubts about an organiser's financial resources. The authority has agreed arrangements where necessary for other ATOL holders to provide cover on a temporary basis until the organisers concerned are able to fulfil the conditions for renewal of their own licences.

(i) Travel organisers who have applied to have their ATOL renewed but whose licences had not been renewed as at 31 March 1993

Abbeysun (NI) Limited
Agricultural Travel Bureau Limited (Barfield Travel, Barfield Business Travel)
Airline Limited (The Holiday Store)
Airlink Holidays Limited (Airlink Holidays)
Aisling Travel (NI) Limited
Alan Dickson and Co. Limited (Alan Dickson Flights, Alan Dickson Travel, Commodore Flights)
Allez France Holidays Limited
Callers-Pegasus Travel Service Limited
Cerviola Holidays Limited
Cityjet Travel Limited (Cityjet, Rafaello Holidays)
Contiki Travel (UK) Limited
Edwin Doran Travel Limited (Edwin Doran's Travel World, Edwin Doran Sports Travel)
Emsdale Air Holidays Limited
Fairs Travel Limited
Farnell R. A., Farnell Mrs. A. (Sun-Air Flight Line)
Finlays Skiing Limited
Gibraltar Travel Limited (Gibraltar Tours, Eagle Tours, Gibraltar Tourism)
Guardian Travel Limited
Intergroup Securities Limited (Inter-Air, Inter-Air Holidays and Travel, Mainsale Travel, Volare)
Islands in the Sun Limited (Islands in the Sun, Island Flights)
Italian Options Limited (Portuguese Options)
John Cory Limited (John Cory Travel)
Justravel Limited
Kartal, D. (Bigfoot Travel)
Leisure Villas Limited
Lotus Travel Limited (Lotus Holidays, Lotus Supertravel)
Magnum Travel Co. Limited (Magnum Leisure)
Modern Travel Centre Limited (Jersey Direct, Modernline Holidays, Modern Hotels, Modern Group, Modern Airways)
Phoenix Holidays Limited
President Holidays Limited (President Travel, President Flights)
Savile Row Tours and Travel Limited (Savile Row Tours and Travel)
Siesta International Holidays Limited (Siesta International)
Skanza Limited (Express Travel and Tours)
Skybus Holidays Limited (Euro Skybus, Italy Cityrama, Italy Skybus)
Strata Travel Limited
Suntours Holidays Limited (Suntours)
Sunway Leisure Limited (Sunway Travel, Sunway Holidays)
Superski Limited (Superski)
The Travel Centre (Norwich) Limited
The Weekend Ski Company Limited (Flexiski)
Transcontinental Travel Service (Scotland) Limited
Travelines Tour Limited (Travelines)
Travelwise International (Manchester) Limited
Travtel International Limited (Travtel)
Trend Travel Limited (Stakis Holidays, Stakis Hotels)
Villmar Travel Limited
Worldspan International Plc
Zodiac Way Limited (Exclusive Travel)

(ii) Air Travel Organisers who have not applied for renewal and therefore no longer hold valid licences

Altours Travel Limited
Contact Travel Limited
Paradise Tours and Travel Limited (Paradise Tours and Travel)
Sports Instruction Schools Limited (SIS Golf Schools, SIS Holidays, The European School of Golf)
Sunwheel Travel Limited (Sunwheel Holidays, Air Savers, Greek Island Holidays)
Susi Madron's Cycling Holidays Limited (Cycling for Softies)
Topflight Holidays Limited (Topflight)
Travac Tours and Charters (UK) Limited (Travac, The Imaginative Traveller)
Travel Economy Limited

(iii) Licence holders who were due to have their ATOLs renewed but who have ceased to trade

Novotour Limited (Novotours, Cyprus Passport, Passport USA, Florida Passport, Turkey Passport, Flight Passport, Airspace, Family Fun Passport, Passport to Florida, American Passport)
Gigantes Villas and Travel Limited (Ski Mondial)
Euro Express limited (Daybreaks Europe, Euro Express, Euro America, Kaleidoscope Travel, Distinctive Villas, Euro Canada, Corsican Gold)
Riva Travel Limited (Riva Travel, Riva Holidays, Riva Seats, Riva, Riva Beachlife)
Medina Holidays (Europe) Limited (Medina Holidays, Greek Express, Beach Comber Holidays, Corfu Holiday Centre)

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Foie Gras

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to press for an EC ban on foie gras.

Mr. Soames: The Government are committed to seeking improvements in welfare standards and the use of humane production methods throughout the Community at every suitable opportunity. A European Parliament resolution is under consideration which would recommend a ban on force feeding of animals in the Community.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to encourage farmers to apply for exemption from 1 July cutting requirements on rotational set-aside land; what assessment he has made of the environmental damage which this requirement will otherwise cause; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: It is open to any farmer to apply for an exemption from any of the set-aside management rules, including the cutting requirement, on environmental grounds. The arable area payments scheme explanatory booklet explains how to do this. The booklet also gives general advice on how to manage set-aside land to achieve environmental benefits.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on restrictions on the spraying of chemicals to reduce noxious weeds on set-aside land in the United Kingdom; and in particular whether similar restrictions are imposed upon farmers in other EC countries.

Mr. Curry: The management rules for 1992-93 allow the application of non-residual herbicides by spot treatment or with a wick applicator on set-aside land. Any farmer can also seek permission to apply herbicides by other methods in order to control severe infestations of weeds. The management rules in other member states vary. Most include restrictions or a complete ban on the use of herbicides on set-aside land.

Dog Poisoning

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column 77, about the death of a pet dog through a suspected poisoned carcase, if he will inform the hon. Member for Taunton of the outcome of his inquiries into a second such suspected poisoning in the same area on or around 20 March.

Mr. Soames: Yes.

Mink Farms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink farms are currently licensed, by county, in England.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
Northumberland	1
Lancashire	9
West Yorkshire	2
Staffordshire	1
Suffolk	2
Hampshire	1
Isle of Wight	1
Cornwall	1

Comfrey

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultation period was permitted for consumers and users of comfrey tablets and capsules to assess the relevant toxicological reports, prior to the withdrawal of these products.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), announced in March 1991 that the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment and the Food Advisory Committee would undertake a review of various herbal ingredients including comfrey. During the course of the COT's review of the toxicity of comfrey a number of organisations, including the National Institute of Medical Herbalists, made submissions to this Department and the Department of Health. The advice from both committees to me on the completion of their reviews was unequivocal. I could not, therefore, allow a further period for consultation before acting to secure the withdrawal of those comfrey products containing the highest concentrations of toxic alkaloids.

Potatoes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Workington of 23 March, *Official Report*, column 863, if he will place in the Library all information he has had made available to him or his officials concerning the payment of subsidies both direct and indirect paid by national Governments and the European Commission to potato processors and producers in the European Community in the last three years.

Mr. Curry: I am not aware that any information has been made available in the way the hon. Member suggests.

Under EC regulation 866/90 United Kingdom potato processors have been awarded £6 million in grants towards the capital cost of new investment over the three years 1991-93. Nationally financed grant of £1·2 million has also been made available in conjuction with the EC scheme. Similar information for other member states is not available.

Certain other assistance is also available to potato processors from Industry Departments in England, Scotland and Wales under a number of schemes.

United Kingdom potato producers may also benefit from the group marketing grant.

Since November 1991 the EC Commission has published in the C series of the *Official Journal* brief details of the state aids to which it has raised no objection. These include our own potato marketing scheme and are summarised as follows:

Aids to potato processors and producers in the EC

Denmark

1. 1988 Expenditure and 1990 Draft Budget for potato trade association funds.
   Adopted: 30 October 1991 *Published:* OJ C 18/8 of 24 January 1992
2. Aid for potato quality control.
   Adopted: 25 March 1992 *Published:* OJ C 155/7 of 20 June 1992

Italy

1. Aid to support the horticulture sector (potatoes).
   Adopted: 21 January 1992 *Published:* OJ C 185/6 of 22 July 1992
2. Special intervention by AIMA for new potatoes for consumption.
   Adopted: 31 August 1992 *Published:* OJ C 286/9 of 4 November 1992
3. AIMA national programme for private storage of potatoes for consumption 1992 marketing year.
   Adopted: 15 October 1992 *Published:* OJ C 316/6 of 3 December 1992

Luxembourg

1. Assistance to farmers suffering from natural disasters in 1991 (including potato producers).
   Adopted: 11 March 1992 *Published:* OJ C 185/6 of 22 July 1992

United Kingdom

1. 1991 Crop arrangements.
   Adopted: 29 October 1991 *Published:* OJ C 32/7 of 8 February 1992
2. 1992 Crop arrangements.
   Adopted: 16 July 1992 *Published:* OJ C 286/6 of 4 November 1992

During the 1992 season, France, Italy and Spain have provided assistance to their potato growers but we do not know the sums involved. In Great Britain, the Potato Marketing Board has operated the statutory guarantee arrangements. The cost to the Government is expected to be in the region of £1·5 million.

Beef

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to introduce legislation ensuring all beef is marked or labelled at the point of sale showing its country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to do so.

European Community rules on labelling already require the place of origin to be given on food if its omission could mislead the consumer. The Government are keen that consumers should be given information about the origin of all food products so that they can make informed choices and have been encouraging retailers to provide this information where appropriate.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the

categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Curry: The Prime Minister is consulted on appointments where necessary. Currently, three appointments made by my right hon. Friend and listed in "Public Bodies 1992" were referred to the Prime Minister.

Intervention Beef

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of British beef were held in intervention stores at 31 March and at the equivalent date in each of the past four years.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out in the table:

Date	*Tonnes (Product weight)*
31 March 1989	27,044
31 March 1990	13,141
31 March 1991	95,007
31 March 1992	140,799
31 March 1993	[1]164,537

[1] Provisional

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total cost of the common agricultural policy for 1992-93; how much of this will be paid by the United Kingdom; and how much of its proceeds will be derived as income for British farmers.

Mr. Curry: Table 22 of the 1993 departmental report by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Intervention Board provides the relevant information on the EC budget, the United Kingdom contribution, and United Kingdom receipts from it in relation to the CAP. Table 20 of the same publication provides information on expenditure within the United Kingdom. A copy of the departmental report has been lodged in the House of Commons Library.

Environmental and Conservation Programmes

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the major environmental and conservation programmes administered by his Department, giving the budget for each for 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food administers the following environmental and conservation schemes:

	Forecast payments to farmers in 1992-93 (£ million)
Environmentally sensitive areas	10·8
Farm and conservation grant scheme	28·9
Farm woodland schemes	1·5
Pilot nitrate sensitive areas	1·4

It also administers the following schemes which have environmental conditions and benefits:

	Forecast payments to farmers in 1992-93 (£ million)
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	34·0
Pilot extensification scheme	0·4
Set-Aside	25·8

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Curry: None.

Oil Dispersants

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why oil dispersants are not tested on marine animal and plant life present in surface waters.

Mr. Curry: Oil dispersants are tested using the brown shrimp Crangon crangon, for the sea test, and the common limpet Patella vulgata, for the rocky shore test. These marine animal species are considered to be suitably representative of marine life for the tests, which are intended to assess the toxicity of a dispersant, or a dispersant mixed with oil, in comparison with the toxicity of oil alone. However, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 1 April at column *329* which announced a review of the current arrangements for the testing and approval of oil dispersants.

Departmental Forms

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his plans for reducing the number of forms which have to be filled in by farmers produced by his Department.

Mr. Curry: A baseline list of forms associated with Ministry regulations which impose a burden on industry has been established. Forms listed in the baseline are subject to review under Ministry deregulation plans. The aim is to identify those which might be simplified or abolished in order to reduce the burden that can be imposed on industry.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many forms he produced to be filled in by farmers for any purpose including making claims for quotas and grants in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1993.

Mr. Curry: The number of forms filled in specifically by farmers in 1993 is not available. Nor is this information available on a historical basis. However, the total number of forms associated with Ministry regulations which impose a burden on industry which the agriculture and food sectors taken as a whole are currently asked to complete is just under 450.

DEFENCE

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the report, "Brown and Root: The Track Record", a copy of which has been sent to him, in regard to the contractorisation of the atomic weapons establishments from 1 April.

Mr. Aitken: The report refers to Brown and Root Inc, which is a United States-managed and operated company. Its allegations do not relate to Brown and Root Ltd., which is a member of the Hunting-BRAE consortium selected to operate AWE. Brown and Root Ltd. is the lead partner in the consortium running Devonport dockyard, where their nuclear safety record has been first class. In selecting Hunting-BRAE Ltd. as the contractor to operate AWE, careful account was taken of the corporate experience of all members of the consortium including their commitment to safety.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) of 19 March, *Official Report*, column *391*, if he will make it his practice to itemise the costs levied on each nuclear test conducted by the United Kingdom in Nevada to cover the management and disposal of radioactive wastes associated with each respective test.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on the 29 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *16*.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he has made for the establishment of Z-berths for nuclear-powered submarines operating in the Persian gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. The term "Z-berth" applies only to locations within the United Kingdom or United Kingdom dependent territories.

Surplus Departmental Properties

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many properties are currently surplus to the long-term requirements of his Department; and if he will list the number of such properties at each of his Department's sites.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's properties were purchased by *(a)* housing associations, *(b)* private developers, *(c)* under do-it-yourself shared ownership schemes, and *(d)* under shared-ownership schemes in each of the last three years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
(a) housing associations	
1990-91	96
1991-92	221
1992-93	299
(b) private developers	
1990-91	875
1991-92	392
1992-93	110

As far as my Department is aware no properties have been purchased directly from the MoD under the DIYSO or shared-ownership schemes. These schemes are run by the Housing Corporation and housing associations. Some of the properties purchased by housing associations or private developers may subsequently have been resold under such schemes.

Helicopter Carrier

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons a limit of three weeks has been set for the contenders to modify their bids for the helicopter carrier; whether he will allow extra time, if this proves to be insufficient time to make the necessary adjustments; and if he will make it his policy to assess the rival bids purely on merits and price.

Mr. Aitken: In response to requests from the tenderers, additional time has been allowed for them to respond to the invitation to clarify their bids. We will hold a full and fair competition for the contract using our normal technical and value for money criteria.

Journalists (Transport and Accommodation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to *(a)* the provision of funding for the transport of journalists, and *(b)* the provision of MoD accommodation for journalists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

MPs (Transport and Accommodation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to *(a)* the provision of funding for the transport of hon. Members and *(b)* the provision of MoD accommodation for hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Scott Inquiry

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *759*, what was the number of documents requested by the Scott inquiry and that he was unable to provide: if he will state their nature; if he will divide his answer into those documents that he was unable to provide because *(a)* they had been destroyed, *(b)* they had been lost and *(c)* for other reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Lord Justice Scott's inquiry has requested a wide range of documents from my Department and no

document requested is being witheld. As Lord Justice Scott made clear at his press conference on 31 March 1993, these requests are continuing and a great deal of work is being done to meet them. It would be inappropriate for me to comment in detail on the number and nature of these requests, which are matters between my Department and Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Bosnia No-fly Zone

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consideration has been given to the deployment of Tornado aircraft to enforce the no-fly zone in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent consideration has been given to the deployment of British military forces to enforce the no-fly zone in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Up to 12 Tornado F3 fighter aircraft and their air-to-air refuelling support have been offered to NATO as part of operations to implement Security Council resolution 816 to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia. The force for the initial deployment is made up of French, Dutch and American aircraft. British and other allies' aircraft are on standby to augment the force if requested to do so.

Falkland Islands

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* journalists and *(b)* hon. Members have visited the Falklands since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no MoD requirement for a permanent record of visits to the Falklands Islands by journalists and hon. Members. No detailed lists are therefore maintained.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

War Crimes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to Her Majesty's forces about war crimes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Army's common military syllabus, the basis of all initial training, contains a module on the law of armed conflict, part of which embodies the correct treatment of prisoners of war.

In addition, individual and collective training, prior to relevant operations, highlights instruction in the law of armed conflict, the Geneva convention and the rules of engagement specific to the operation in question.

Redundancies

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel will now be made redundant under "Options for Change"; how many of those being made redundant are from Scottish regiments or have been previously posted to Scotland; and of those, how many are currently in single accommodation within the services and how many are in family accommodation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, a total of 12,440 service personnel have been selected for redundancy. In addition, in my answer to the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 1 April, *Official Report*, column *323*, I said that a maximum in the order of 2,300 redundancies would take place in the Royal Navy between April and November 1994. Further redundancies in each of the services beyond these will depend on the manning situation.

A total of 486 personnel from Scottish regiments have been selected for redundancy in phases 1 and 2 of the Army's redundancy programme. Information about the number of personnel selected for redundancy who have served in Scotland and about the type of accommodation occupied by personnel made redundant is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Army Houses

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of unoccupied houses owned by the armed services in Scotland which are *(a)* uninhabitable and *(b)* inhabitable.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 31 December 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 270 unoccupied service married quarters in Scotland were uninhabitable and 547 inhabitable. The uninhabitable properties were either undergoing or awaiting major works services while many of the inhabitable ones were either allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly or under consideration for disposal. In addition, 171 surplus married quarters were in the process of being sold.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Aitken: The numbers of women, disabled and ethnic minority staff in grade levels 1 to 7 and overall are given in the table. These figures exclude our executive agencies, the Meteorological Office and the Defence Research Agency. I have asked the chief executives to write to the hon. and learned Member.

Grade	*Registered disabled*[1]	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Non-registered disabled*[1]	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Ethnic minority*[2]	*Percentage of staff in grade*	*Women*	*Percentage of staff in grade*
1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	2	4·2	—	—	2	4·3
4	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	4·0
5	—	—	9	2·9	11	3·5	14	4·5

Grade	Registered disabled[1]	Percentage of staff in grade	Non-registered disabled[1]	Percentage of staff in grade	Ethnic minority[2]	Percentage of staff in grade	Women	Percentage of staff in grade
6	—	—	10	1·9	<10	<1·0	15	2·9
7	3	0·1	77	3·8	31	1·5	130	6·4
Total[3]	1,439	1·1	3,312	4·0	1,849	1·5	40,634	32·0

[1] Figures based on responses to voluntary disability surveys.
[2] Figures based on responses to voluntary ethnic origin survey.
[3] Non-industrial and industrial staff.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Greville Janner, dated 14 April 1993:

In his written reply to your Parliamentary Question on the numbers of women, people from ethnic minorities and disabled people working in MOD, the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying directly to you in respect of the Defence Research Agency. The information you request, a copy of which has been placed in the House of Commons Library, is as follows:

Grade	(1) Registered disabled	Percentage of staff in Grade	(1) Non-registered disabled	Percentage of staff in Grade	(2) Ethnic minority	Percentage of staff in Grade	Women	Percentage of staff in grade
1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	—	—	1	2·40	—	—	1	2·40
6	—	—	8	3·80	—	—	3	1·40
7	1	0·10	33	3·80	10	1·2	29	3·30
Total Non-industrial staff (3)	69	0·86	253	3·18	133	1·67	2,824	35·50

Notes:
(1) Figures based on responses to voluntary disability surveys.
(2) Figures based on responses to voluntary ethnic origin survey.
(3) Statistics on the 2,606 Industrial staff cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost and administrative effort.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. Greville Janner, dated 5 April 1993:

The figures below give the details for the Meteorological Office, as requested in your recent Parliamentary Question:

Grades 1–4 : 0 (out of 3)
Grade 5 : 1 disabled (12·5 per cent.)
Grade 6 : 2 women (6·5 per cent.)
Grade 7 : 2 disabled (1·3 per cent.), 1 from an ethnic minority (0·7 per cent.), 7 women (4·1 per cent.)
Overall : 10 disabled (0·9 per cent.), 23 from ethnic minorities (1·0 per cent.), 447 women (17·7 per cent.).

Note: Only those registered disabled are included in the 'disabled' figures.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Correspondence

Dr. Godman: To ask the Lord President of the Council when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive a reply to his letter dated 27 January anent certain matters relating to ministerial statements.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

18. **Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he is taking in support of the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our priority is an early resumption of the middle east peace process. The United Kingdom was represented on a European Community troika mission to the middle east from 30 March to 2 April. The troika urged all parties to accept the co-sponsors' invitation to the next round of negotiations in Washington on 20 April.

Russia

23. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet his Russian counterpart to discuss United Kingdom-Russian relations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present for a further meeting with Mr. Kozyrev, but we keep in regular contact. They discussed British-Russian relations when they met in Moscow earlier this month.

Maastricht Treaty

24. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received to date about holding a referendum on the Maastricht treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There have been several such calls. We do not believe that a referendum on the treaty is either necessary or appropriate.

Singapore

25. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current status of Britain's relations with Singapore.

Mr. Goodlad: Our relations with Singapore are excellent, as I was able to confirm during my visit from 5 to 7 April.

While in Singapore, I had talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. Goh Chok Tong, the senior Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, and other Ministers on a range of issues. I also met leading figures in the economic and commercial sectors, and was able to reiterate the growing interest of British firms in doing business with Singapore, now the United Kingdom's 19th largest export market with two-way trade in 1992 totalling over £2 billion.

Relations are strong, too, in the fields of English language teaching and education, with some 3,000 Singaporean students attending tertiary courses in the United Kingdom. We continue to attach importance to defence co-operation, through the five power defence arrangements and the Royal Navy's use of two berths at Sembawang.

South Africa

26. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards the holding of multiracial elections in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A multi-party planning conference was held on 5-6 March which agreed that multi-party talks will resume on 1 April. All major parties, except the Azanian People's organisation, are represented in the 26-member committee which is preparing for the talks. These talks are expected to lead to the establishment of a transitional executive structure later this year, followed by free non-racial elections.

32. **Sir Michael Grylls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the status of talks aimed at the establishment of an interim Government in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Constitutional negotiations involving all significant political groupings in South Africa are due to begin on 1 or 2 April. These talks are expected to lead to the establishment of a transitional executive structure in June, followed by elections to a constitution-making body and the establishment of an interim government of national unity.

Iran

27. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the links between Iran and international terrorism.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our European partners made clear at the Edinburgh summit in December our concern at Iranian behaviour in a number of areas, particularly the fatwa against Salman Rushdie and terrorism.

Bosnia

28. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our EC partners have welcomed the Bosnian Muslim and Croat agreement to the international conference's peace plan for Bosnia. The Bosnian Serbs must now sign. Urgent work is in hand in New York to apply pressure on the Serbs to secure their agreement.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the remit, which he and other EC Foreign Ministers gave at the Edinburgh summit, to the team charged with investigating allegations of rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The remit of the EC investigative mission into allegations of abuse of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina is set out in the declaration issued by the EC Foreign Ministers at the conclusion of the Edinburgh summit. The declaration was issued as a UN Security Council document. A copy is in the Library.

European Community (Responsibility)

29. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the principal areas of policy or administration for which the European Community has exclusive responsibility.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The European Community has exclusive competence where that is conferred upon it by treaty provision or measures taken under the treaty. It is not possible to draw up an exhaustive theoretical list. Current examples include the common agricultural policy, the common commercial policy and the external tariff.

Japan

30. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Japan.

33. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about United Kingdom relations with Japan.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Japan from 6 to 7 April. Following his discussions with the Japanese Government as well as with a wide range of people from different walks of life, we remain strongly of the view that our relations with Japan are excellent. We hold similar views on the major world issues. We shall be working hard to make the relationship yet closer and more productive.

Angola

31. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he is planning through the United Nations to end the fighting in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In accordance with the mandate conferred by United Nations Security Council resolution

811 of 12 March, the United Nations Secretary General is now consulting the Government of Angola and UNITA to establish the date, place and agenda for direct UNITA/Government of Angola talks under United Nations auspices. We are actively supporting his efforts.

Sudan

34. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department last made representations about human rights to the Government of Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I last raised Sudan's human rights performance with the Sudanese ambassador on 22 February. My right honourable and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey also raised the issue with him on 1 April. We were in the lead in securing a resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on 10 March providing for a public investigation of the human rights situation in Sudan.

United Nations (Reform)

35. **Ms Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what view Her Majesty's Government take of current proposals for reform of the structures and powers of the United Nations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have long worked for and support steps to reform the workings of the United Nations which promote efficiency and streamline the organisation. We have backed the Secretary-General's reforms of the secretariat. With our European Community partners, we have been at the forefront of moves to restructure and revitalise the Economic and Social Council and to promote good management and administration in the United Nations specialised agencies.

Yugoslavia

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his ministerial colleagues from other member states of the Security Council of the United Nations to discuss the enforcement of UN resolutions 713, 757 and 787 relating to trade and arms embargoes against the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last discussed these issues with the US Secretary of State on 25 March. We are in regular contact with other member states represented at the Security Council.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's ambassador to the United Nations will propose enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Kingdom co-sponsored UN Security Council resolution 816, which authorises enforcement of the no-fly zone established by Security Council resolutions 781 of 9 October 1992 and 786 of 11 November 1992.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *653*, if he has received a copy of the UNPROFOR report on the recent breach of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina; what was the origin, destination and type of the aircraft concerned; and on what basis it was identified as a Bosnian-Serb aircraft.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have received a copy of Note Verbale S/24900/Add.27 of 16 March from the United Nations Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council, which gives details of the three aircraft observed bombing the village of Gladovici.

The report does not specify the origin of the aircraft. One aircraft was a single-engined propellor-driven biplane, the other two being single-engined propellor-driven monoplanes. It was not possible to determine the precise type of destination of the aircraft, but all three withdrew towards the Bosnian/Serbian border. The circumstantial evidence therefore suggests that the aircraft were operated by the Bosnian Serbs.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Nations monitors are in place at each Bosnian-Serb airfield in the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and each airfield in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; and how many combat missions have departed from any of these airfields since their installation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: UNPROFOR airfield monitors are stationed in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at Batajnica/Surcin, Ponikve, Kraljevo, Berane, Podgorica, Pristina and Nis and in Bosnia at Mahorljani, Zaluzahi, Cazin and Tuzla.

No sorties positively identified as for combat purposes have been recorded departing from any of the airfields at which UNPROFOR monitors are stationed.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the oral answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 1 April 1993 to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), c. 499.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when was the last occasion on which fixed wing or propeller aircraft from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia crossed into Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The last occasions on which aircraft unauthorised by UNPROFOR were observed crossing from Serbian airspace into Bosnia-Herzegovina were on 14 March, when violations by three separate aircraft—one helicopter, one biplane and one monoplane—were reported.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the total number of violations of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina by *(a)* Bosnian-Serb fixed wing aircraft, *(b)* Bosnian-Serb helicopters, *(c)* Bosnian-Muslim fixed wing aircraft, *(d)* Bosnian-Muslim helicopters, *(e)* Croatian fixed wing aircraft and *(f)* Croatian helicopters since its introduction.

Mr. Garel-Jones: UNPROFOR reports of violations of the no-fly zone do not normally attribute individual violations to parties. Nor is it in many cases possible to determine whether the violating aircraft is fixed or rotary wing.

Kenya

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on relations with Kenya following the policy decisions of the international financial institutions.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are urging the Kenyan Government to reopen discussions with the IMF/World Bank with a view to reaching agreement at the earliest opportunity.

Know-how Funds

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the know-how funds for the Confederation of Independent States, central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: The know-how fund is kept regularly under review. The fund is well regarded for its effective and flexible contributions to economic and political reform.

Israel

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to assist the ending of the Arab trade boycott of Israel.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: We consider the Arab boycott to be iniquitous and incompatible with the spirit of the peace process. Calls on the Arab League to lift the boycott were made at the 1991 London economic summit, at the Lisbon European Council of June 1992, and in a series of European Community demarches in September 1992. We shall continue to pursue this issue with Arab Governments.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had with the Israeli Government on whether Israeli settlements in the west bank, Gaza strip, Golan heights and East Jerusalem are continuing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Ministers have regularly discussed the settlement issue with the Israelis; most recently with the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister and the Israeli Minister of Housing who were both in London last month. The Israeli Government instituted some curbs on settlement activity in the west bank and Gaza shortly after its formation last year. This was a welcome move, but fell short of the total ban on settlements in the occupied territories which we, and other members of the international community, had called for. It remains our view that all settlements in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has recently received on changes in Israeli settlements in the west bank, Gaza strip, Golan heights and east Jerusalem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Israeli Government instituted some curbs on settlement activity in the west bank and Gaza shortly after its formation last year. This was a welcome move but fell short of the total ban on settlements in the occupied territories which we, and other members of the international community, had called for. Settlement activity continues in East Jerusalem. It remains our view that all settlements in the occupied territories, including east Jerusalem, are illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information Her Majesty's Government possess on the violation of the human rights of Palestinians in Israel in each month since January 1992.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We receive regular information from a variety of sources on the human rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The situation there remains a matter of great concern as my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), made clear in a speech to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 9 February.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Israel concerning the imprisonment of Mordechai Vanunu; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have raised with the Israelis concerns over humanitarian aspects of this case. They have assured us that the conditions under which Mr. Vanunu is detained have now improved. We have no formal locus to intervene.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action has been taken within the nuclear non-proliferation treaty concerning Israeli nuclear capability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As Israel is not a party to the non-proliferation treaty, it is not subject to its provisions. We are, however, concerned by reports that Israel has a nuclear weapons programme, although we have no direct evidence to confirm that this is the case, and would like Israel to accede to the treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state as soon as possible.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department was represented at the meeting launching the appeal for a nuclear test ban held in Committee Room 6 on 30 March.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No.

Weapons Conventions

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what legislation is required before *(a)* the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva convention and *(b)* the 1981 inhumane weapons convention can be ratified by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Should we decide to ratify the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva conventions, legislation would be needed at least in the form of an amendment to the Geneva Conventions Act of 1957, to create criminal offences in respect of grave breaches of additional protocol I, as required by article 85 of that protocol. The need for legislation on any further points is under consideration.

It is not thought that legislation would be required to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Garel-Jones: One.

Norway

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Norway's application to join the European Community, in regard to environment and foreign and security policy.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We welcome Norway's application to join the Community and look forward to the swift conclusion of accession negotiations, which began on 5 April. Norway has said that she is ready to participate fully in the common foreign and security policy and has played a full role in international environment policy. The precise terms of accession in these and other areas will be the subject of negotiation.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *441*, how many vehicles were imported free of tax into St. Helena owned by United Kingdom or St. Helena Government employees.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The available figures for private vehicles imported free of tax, on first arrival, by employees of the United Kingdom and St. Helena Governments are as follows:

Vehicles imported free of tax by employees of the United Kingdom and St. Helena Governments

Year	*Number*
1987	3
1988	21
1989	4
1990	11
1991	10
1992	8
TOTAL	57

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters in regard to nuclear non-proliferation were discussed during his recent meetings in the United States of America.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed nuclear non-proliferation matters in the context of preparations for the 1995 nuclear non-proliferation treaty extension and review conference, notably current problems with North Korea and Ukraine.

Iraq

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Iraqi interests section of the Jordanian embassy about the release of funds for Iraqi students and their host academic institutions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have urged the Iraqi interests section of the Royal Jordanian embassy on many occasions to settle outstanding bills in respect of students sponsored by the Iraqi Government. We have recently assisted them to set up a mechanism which facilitates the settlement of these bills. This mechanism conforms to the provisions of the United Nations sanctions regime.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the latest position over the UN-supervised programme of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; and if he will itemise what has so far been destroyed and the likely number yet to be dealt with.

Mr. Garel-Jones: UN inspectors continue to carry out inspections and monitoring in Iraq in accordance with Security Council resolution 687.

Destruction on prohibited items, facilities and components is under way. The UN estimates that destruction of chemical agents will continue for a further nine to 10 months; the extent of other destruction activity has yet to be determined.

Inspectors have so far supervised the destruction of:

Ballistic Missiles and Supergun
62 ballistic missiles
10 ballistic missile launchers
18 fixed sound launch pads

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government and the UN towards the sale of oil by the Iraqi regime; what response there has been so far from the regime; and what steps have been taken to publicise the reasons for the present UN policy among the populations of UN member states.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The sale of oil by the Iraqi regime is forbidden under the terms of United Nations Security Council resolution 687 until the Government of Iraq comply with the provisions of that resolution which laid out the terms of the ceasefire. But under the provisions of two subsequent UN Security Council resolutions, 706 and 712, Iraq is able to export up to $1·6 billion worth of oil in exchange for the financing of humanitarian imports. The Iraqi Government have chosen not to implement these resolutions. We have consistently called on Iraq to implement all relevant UN Security Council resolutions. We also hope that Iraq will take advantage of the opportunity to export oil. We have made our position clear on frequent occasions, notably with other members so the Security Council at the regular reviews of UN sanctions against Iraq.

Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the report made by the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the IAEA's board of governors on 31 March on the nuclear status of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In accordance with the IAEA board of governors' resolutions of 25 February and 18 March, the Director-General of the IAEA made a statement to the board of governors on 31 March on safeguards in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Dr. Blix reported that the IAEA was unable to verify that there has been no diversion by the DPRK of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and that the DPRK was in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement with the agency.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give an estimate of the number of retired pensioners of the Hong Kong Government there will be at the date when control of the colony passes to China.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Based on present retirement patterns, the estimated number of Hong Kong Government pensioners at the end of June 1997 should stand at some 51,000.

Correspondence

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Bradford, West about the murder of Mrs. Hamida Mattoo by security forces in Indian-occupied Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall be writing to the hon. Gentleman shortly about the death of Mrs. Hamida Mattoo.

Cyprus

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Nations talks on Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The United Nations Secretary-General held a formal meeting with the leaders of the two Cypriot communities in New York on 30 March. The two leaders expressed their willingness to resume talks in New York on 24 May and to use the "Set of Ideas" for the purpose of reaching a mutually acceptable overall framework agreement. We continue actively to support the UN initiative.

Somalia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Somali asylum seekers have been interviewed at the British embassy in Cairo for each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No Somali asylum-seekers have been interviewed at the British embassy in Cairo in the last 12 months. However, the number of Somali nationals interviewed in the British embassy, Cairo in connection with their applications to join sponsors who have claimed asylum in the United Kingdom is as follows:

	Numbers interviewed	*Dependents of applicants*
April 1992	1	3
May 1992	1	4
June 1992	1	0
July 1992	2	1
August 1992	1	0
September 1992	0	0
October 1992	1	1
November 1992	0	0
December 1992	0	0
January 1993	0	0
February 1993	0	0
March 1993	2	3
Total	9	12

SCOTLAND

Local Government Reform

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect he expects the transfer of undertakings (protection of employees) legislation to have on the proposed local government reforms; what cost implications there will be and on which bodies they will fall; and what account was taken of the calculations prepared for his Department by Touche Ross.

Mr. Stewart: The question of whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations will apply can be determined only in the light of individual circumstances and following careful legal consideration. We envisage that most local authority staff who are currently employed by local authorities will in any case, by one means or another, become the employees of the new authorities. In preparing its report on costs, Touche Ross assumed that all staff would transfer to the new authorities and that any surplus staff would be made redundant by those authorities.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of the implications for public sector expenditure over the next five years of the proposed reform of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office engaged consultants last year to estimate the costs and savings likely to arise from a move to a single-tier structure of local government in Scotland. The consultants' findings are at present being refined in the light of comments on their report. The available evidence suggests that our reform proposals will give rise to transitional costs which will be quickly recovered by savings arising from the new structure. An indication of the likely financial consequences of reform will be included in due course in a White Paper setting out our proposals.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision he will make for accountability when transferring existing local authority powers from directly elected Scottish local councils to the Scottish Office and to non-elected bodies.

Mr. Stewart: Local authority functions are regularly reviewed. New duties are placed on local government in appropriate circumstances and some functions are assumed at other times by other bodies or agencies. Questions of accountability, service delivery and a range of other issues are given full consideration in each case.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify the reasons which underlay the Government's decision to establish a local government commission to inquire into local government reform in England but not in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The fact that a commission has been appointed in England to consider local government restructuring is not itself a necessary reason for adopting a similar procedure in Scotland. It is appropriate to adopt Scottish solutions to Scottish problems. Similarly, no such commission has been appointed in Wales. The present structure of local government in Scotland and the evidence available from previous reviews mean that the current reform exercise is of a smaller scale and less complex than that in England. The Government have recently completed a very full consultation exercise about the shape of the new single-tier structure to which over 3,300 responses were submitted. These are now being carefully analysed.

Transplants

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many patients are on waiting lists for bone marrow transplants, and for transplants for cases of genetic and metabolic disorders;

(2) what provision is made for patients who require a bone marrow transplant; and what provision is made for funding transplants for genetic and metabolic disorders.

Mr. Stewart: It is for health boards to negotiate contracts for the provision of bone marrow transplant services. As at 31 March 1993 there were four adult patients waiting for bone marrow transplants in Scotland. There is no waiting list for bone marrow transplants for genetic or metabolic disorders.

Agency Nurses

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that agency nurses employed in NHS hospitals are always suitably qualified and experienced for the wards to which they are allocated.

Mr. Stewart: In Scotland agencies for the supply of nurses are licensed under part III of the Nurses (Scotland) Act 1951. The licensing authority for nurses agencies in Scotland is the health board for the area in which the agency's premises are situated.

Conditions attached to the granting of a licence are stringent and include a requirement that agencies supply only nurses on the register of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting. These, and other conditions, are enforced by the licensing authority. In addition, my noble Friend the Minister of State announced on 15 June 1992 the intention that all patients would have a named nurse to ensure that in all circumstances suitably qualified and experienced nurses are available to patients.

European Community

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *687*, what is the total number of persons, and of what grade or level, seconded to *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* the UKREP to the EC since 1973; and how many of those who have completed their secondment are still employed by his Department.

Mr. Stewart: Between 1981 and 1993 13 Scottish Office staff between higher executive officer and unified grade 7 level or professional equivalent have been seconded to the European Commission, of whom 11 are still employed by the Department. Figures for the period 1973-81 are not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

Since 1973, seven Scottish Office staff have been seconded to UKREP, of whom six are still employed by the Department. Two were at higher executive officer level, two at unified grade 7 and three at unified grade 5 level.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are Her Majesty's Government's current intentions in relation to *(a)* the future of the Forest Enterprise wing of the Forestry Commission and *(b)* the future of the regulatory functions of the Forestry Commission in England, Wales and Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands, (Mr. Knox) on 30 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *150*. We have no plans at present to change the regulatory functions of the Forestry Commission.

Pupil-teacher Ratio

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average pupil-teacher ratio at September 1991 in education authority schools in Scotland was 19·5 in primary and 12·4 in secondary.

This information was published in the Scottish Office Education Department statistical bulletin, "Schools, Pupils and Teachers in Scotland" (Edn/A1/1993/1), tables 4 and 6. A copy of the bulletin is in the House of Commons Library.

Countryside (Access)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to charge for access to parts of the countryside in public ownership; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussion he has had with land owners concerning access to the countryside; and if he will make a statement;.

(3) what representations he has received concerning access to the countryside.

Sir Hector Monro: All aspects of access to the countryside, whether in public or private ownership, are

currently under active review by Scottish Natural Heritage. SNH issued a public consultation paper in January 1993. The consultation period ends on 16 April 1993, following which it will be developing policy proposals for the consideration of Government and other interests. I cannot anticipate at this stage what these might be.

Fishing Exclusion Zone

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to extend the fishing exclusion zone to encompass areas where high levels of oil contamination have been found associated with sediment south of the current exclusion zone.

Sir Hector Monro: Detailed monitoring has been carried out by Government scientists since oil-contaminated sediments were first found to the south-east of Fair Isle. Results have shown that while sediments have been contaminated by Braer oil, hydrocarbon concentrations in the water column and in samples of fish from the vicinity have been within background levels. In these circumstances I see no need to extend the existing exclusion zone.

A1 (Upgrading)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans for upgrading the A1 road in Scotland, giving the timetable for construction and completion of each section and the estimated costs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government consider that it would be desirable for the A1 to be dualled over its full length in Scotland. Work is currently under way on the £1·6 million dualling scheme at Marshall Meadows which will tie into a Department of Transport improvement at the national border. This scheme will be completed during the summer. The major route priority is the construction of a dual carriageway from Tranent to Haddington. Draft orders for this scheme were published on 30 March and, subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, construction of this £33 million scheme will commence in 1994-95. The preparation of the Haddington-Dunbar scheme, which is also estimated to cost in excess of £30 million, is following the earlier scheme at an interval of about 12 months.

Between Dunbar and the Border, some six further dualling schemes are being prepared along the route for early construction. Subject to satisfactory completion of the necessary procedures, up to three of these should start this financial year with the remainder planned to follow in the current public expenditure period. The schemes are:

	£ million
Cement Works-Innerwick	2·6
Tower-Penmanshiel	1·5
Howburn-Lemington	2·1
Thistly Cross-Broxburn	4·4
Broxburn-Cement Works	1·75
Houndwood-Howburn	1·75

In addition to the above, local schemes to provide early safety and operational improvements on the route will continue to be brought forward.

The timing of all the above schemes will be dependent on the completion of the necessary preparatory work and statutory procedures and, for the later schemes, the availability of finance.

Further schemes will be identified and constructed as they compete for, and find, places in future programmes.

Child Care

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been given to Scottish Enterprise in 1993-94 for the new after-school child care initiative.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* Resources for a new programme for the provision of out-of-school child care have been included in the overall budget for Scottish Enterprise for 1993-94. The relevant resources have not been separately identified, in accordance with normal budgeting arrangements for these bodies. The detailed allocation of resources to specific activities is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and for the local enterprise companies.

Health Board Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish a list of companies employing staff transferred from employment with health boards; and what information he has on the wage rates they are offering new employees;

(2) how many health boards have been advised by the Central Legal Office to provide private contractors with details of length of service of their employees.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* Information about companies employing transferred staff is not collected. Under the terms of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, existing rates and conditions of service would apply in the case of any staff affected by such a relevant transfer.

No advice has been given by the central legal office of the NHS to health boards to provide contractors with details of service of employees.

Forestry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what input has been received from non-governmental organisations in relation to the development of the national plan to implement the non-binding statement of forest principles agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(2) what progress has been made with regard to the development of the national plan to implement the non-binding statement of forest principles agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 1 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *18*. The national plan is still in course of preparation. We have not yet sought the views of non-governmental organisations, but will do so later this year before the plan is completed.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what incentives exist for the production of hardwoods from broadleaved woodlands in the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The Government provide grants, through the woodland grant scheme, to encourage the establishment of new broadleaved woodlands and the better management of existing broadleaved woodlands to meet a range of objectives, including the production of quality hardwood timber. The grants are supported by advice, which is summarised in Forestry Commission Handbook No. 9, "Growing Broadleaves for Timber", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Untreated Cream

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to allow low capacity establishments with a proven hygiene record to sell untreated cream in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish milk hygiene legislation is being reviewed in the context of implementation of EC directive 92/46 which lays down health rules for the production and marketing of raw milk, heat-treated milk and milk-based products. The Government will invite views on all aspects of the present legislation in the course of consultation on new draft regulations later this year.

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of a permit or licence to hunt on Forestry Commission land.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 19 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *247*.

Historic Scotland

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the key performance targets he has set for Historic Scotland for 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: I have set Historic Scotland the following key performance targets for 1993-94:

Protecting the built heritage	*Target*
i. Number of ancient monuments of national importance to be scheduled	340
ii. Number of listed buildings resurvey units to be completed	150
iii. Number of historic building repair grants accepted	135
iv. Conservation of monuments in care	reduce maintenance backlog
Promoting and presenting the built heritage	
i. Number of visitors to monuments in care	2·4 million
ii. Total income	£7·5 million
Management	
i. Value for money savings on maintenance of monuments in care (per cent.)	3·5

Mink

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many mink farms are currently licensed in each region of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: There is one licensed mink farm operating in Scotland, in Grampian region.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the time it took between reports of incidents involving breaches of health and safety laws in the offshore oil and gas industries and referrals made to the procurator fiscal in each of the past seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding Answer 24 March 1993]:* Problems have been experienced in recovering data stored on computer and many records formerly held by the procurator fiscal's office at Aberdeen were destroyed by fire in April 1989. Information for each of the past seven years is therefore not fully available.

In such highly technical cases it can also be difficult to select a single point as marking the date of the start of the procurator fiscal's investigations, but in a survey of 10 cases the time taken between the receipt of cases by the procurator fiscal and the start of court proceedings varied as shown in the table. Much depended on the complexity of the technical evidence and on the scale of the specialised investigation required.

In addition there are two substantial investigations which have been in progress since 1990, and two dating from 1991, in which decisions on prosecution will shortly be taken.

After Receipt of Reports

Proceedings Begun	*Number of Cases*
within 1 month	1
within 3 months but over 1 month	2
within 6 months but over 3 months	0
within 1 year but over 6 months	3
within 18 months but over 1 year	2
within 2 years but over 18 months	1
within 2½ years but over 2 years	1

Care in the Community

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the additional funds for the care in the community programme, announced on 23 March, relates to *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The additional £28 million for the care in the community programme will be used for bridging finance and distributed as follows: *(a)* £4 million 1993-94, *(b)* £9 million 1994-95 and *(c)* £15 million 1995-96.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the additional allocation to the care in the community programme over the period 1993-94 to 1995-96, announced on 23 March *(a)* is bridging finance to health boards and *(b)* is in addition to bridging finance for the period 1992-93 to 1994-95 announced on 23 January 1992.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The £28 million which I announced on 23 March for the care in the community programme is for bridging finance to health boards and is additional to that announced on 23 January 1992.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the bridging finance for the care in the community programme, announced on 23 January 1992, relates to *(a)* 1992-93, *(b)* 1993-94 and *(c)* 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: In addition to an original £15 million bridging finance provision, apportioned equally over the three each financial years 1992-92 to 1993-94, the 23 January 1992 announcement confirmed an additional £18 million of bridging finance to be allocated on the basis of £6 million for each financial year, 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much of the bridging finance for the care in the community programme, announced on 23 January 1992, relates to *(a)* care of the mentally ill, *(b)* care of the mentally handicapped and *(c)* care of the elderly;

(2) how much of the additional funds for the care in the community programme announced on 23 March relates to *(a)* care of the mentally ill, *(b)* care of the mentally handicapped and *(c)* care of the elderly.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The amounts of bridging finance announced are available for distribution to all three client groups. Allocations to individual health boards reflect differing demands at their local level and so may be directed to any one or more of the client groups.

River Clyde (Dredging)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the overall cost of the dredging of the channel of the River Clyde in each of the past eight years; which organisation is responsible for the maintenance of the channel; which organisations make an annual financial contribution to the dredging operations; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* The gross costs incurred by the Clyde Port Authority in dredging the River Clyde in each of the past eight years were as follows:

	£ million
1984	918,000
1985	931,000
1986	884,000
1987	1,012,000
1988	1,043,000
1989	1,068,000
1990	1,209,000
1991	1,112,000

Clydeport Ltd., as successor to the former Clyde Port Authority, has a permissive power to dredge the river channel to the extent that it is considered necessary for the maintenance and improvement of the port, but has no statutory duty to dredge.

Strathclyde regional council, Glasgow district council, Yarrow Shipbuilders and Kvaerner Govan have all made contributions towards the cost of dredging in recent years. It remains the Government's policy that port authorities, including Clydeport Ltd. should manage their businesses on a commercial basis and that the costs of dredging should be met by charges to the users of ports, or by other parties who benefit from the dredging.

Young People

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to publish statistics and other information about the number of persons aged 16 to 17 years in each local enterprise company area who are *(a)* without a job, *(b)* not on an approved training course and *(c)* not undertaking a full-time education course.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* None. This information is not available in the form requested.

Employment Protection

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Cleaning and Support Services Association in relation to the implementation of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and compulsory competitive tendering by regional, island and district councils and health boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* I received a number of representations from the Cleaning and Support Services Association about the implementation of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. My right hon. Friend made his position clear in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on 11 March 1993, c. *716-17.*

Edinburgh Dental School

Mr. Alistair Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will meet the cost incurred by the University of Edinburgh in making redundant the staff employed at the Edinburgh dental school following the decision that the school will close in 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployed Young People

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether children between the age of 16 and 18 years who are estranged from their parents and receiving income support while unemployed are excluded from the total unemployment monthly figures.

Mr. McLoughlin: Those aged 16 to 17 who receive unemployment-related benefits as special hardship cases are included in the headline total of the monthly claimant unemployment count, but not in the corresponding consistent, seasonally adjusted series. In order to maintain consistency, over time the latter is restricted to those aged 18 and over.

Job Schemes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the age requirements that govern eligibility for each job scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: For each of the job programmes run by the Employment Service, the lower age limit is the 18th birthday and there is no upper age limit.

Unemployment, Llanfair Caereinion

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals she has for reducing unemployment in Llanfair Caereinion; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Employment Service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help the employment prospects of unemployed people. These are available to people living in Llanfair Caereinion, as elsewhere, to help them find the quickest and best route back to employment.

Lost Working Days

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost per 1,000 workers in the United Kingdom during each of the last two years.

Mr. McLoughlin: There were 24 working days lost per 1,000 workers in labour disputes in 1992, compared with 34 working days lost per 1,000 workers in 1991.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the appointments made by her as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. McLoughlin: Within the non-departmental public bodies covered by the Employment Department group, seven appointments came within the categories referred to in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". These seven were given approval by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, although actually appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Gas Boilers

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to review safety standards for domestic gas boilers and flues; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am advised by the Department of Trade and Industry that the safety requirements for all non-industrial gas applicances were reviewed recently during the development of the EC Gas Appliance Directive, adopted on 29 June 1990 and due to come fully into effect on 1 January 1996. In accordance with the requirement of this directive, European harmonised product safety standards for all gas appliances within the scope of the directive are currently under consideration by the European standardisation body, CEN.

Vocational Training

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will respond to the recommendations of the Equal Opportunity Commission's formal investigation into the publicly funded vocational training system in England and Wales; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We welcome the Equal Opportunities Commission's report as a positive contribution to promoting equality of opportunity for women. We are pleased to see that the report contains many examples of effective and innovative training practice introduced by the training and enterprise councils. We look forward to continued partnership with the commission in considering its recommendations.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am aware of two such certificates so far as the Employment Department group is concerned.

Family Size

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *267*, on families with four or more children, if she will indicate what is meant by a one plus child family.

Mr. McLoughlin: This phrase was used to describe families with one or more children in order to provide a concise answer to my hon. Friend's original question; I regret any misunderstanding that this may have caused.

Training Programmes

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people participated in *(a)* employment training, *(b)* youth training and *(c)* employment action in Great Britain in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and at what average cost per trainee in (i) cash terms and (ii) 1992-93 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Table 1
Great Britain—Number of Starts
Employment training, youth training and employment action
April 1989 to March 1992

(Numbers)

	April 1989-March 1990	*April 1990-March 1991*	*April 1991-March 1992*
Employment training	430,600	394,100	291,600
Youth training	383,800	347,800	293,000
Employment action	n/a	n/a	19,300

Source: SPECTRUM, OSMOSIS, Scotland and Wales management Information and ET Starts Database.
Notes:
Employment action did not start until 1 October 1991, therefore no figures are available for 1989-90 and 1990-91.
1991-92 figures are provisional estimates.
Youth training includes youth credits.

Table 2
Great Britain
Employment training, youth training and employment action
April 1989 to March 1992

Cost per trainee in (i) cash terms and (ii) 1992-93 prices

(£'s)

	April 1989-March 1990	*April 1990-March 1991*	*April 1991-March 1992*
Employment training			
(i)	5,404	5,384	6,014
(ii)	6,443	5,944	6,224
Youth training			
(i)	2,620	2,375	2,735
(ii)	3,124	2,622	2,831
Employment action			
(i)	n/a	n/a	6,100
(ii)	n/a	n/a	6,314

Source: Departmental Report and HM Treasury's GDP deflators.
Notes: Unit cost figures are calculated from the average numbers in training over the year.
Employment action did not start until 1 October 1991, therefore no figures are available for 1989-90 and 1990-91.
The EA unit cost figure for 1991-92 is an accruals unit cost, which takes the expenditure back to the year in which the participant weeks are delivered.
Unit cost figures for Employment Training and Employment Action differ slightly from the figures published in the 1993 departmental report as the departmental report figures covered England only.
All figures at 1992-93 prices were calculated using the latest published version (17/3/93) of HM Treasury's GDP deflators.
Youth training includes youth credits.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list every training programme and employment initiative by her Department with the month and year of its inception and demise and the number of participants since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment further to the answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *209*, about amounts spent on training programmes, what are the equivalent figures for 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Member giving the figures requested, when the information for 1992-93 is complete.

Part-time Employment

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the percentage of part-time *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) England, (iv) Northern Ireland and (v) Great Britain who earned less than (1) £3·80 an hour, (2) £4.00 an hour, (3) £5.20 an hour and (4) £5.40 an hour in 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information for part-time women closest to that requested is given in the following table. Information for part-time men is not available.

Part-time women on adult rates of pay whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence.
Percentage with average gross hourly earnings less than the following amounts: April 1992.

	£3·80	*£4·00*	*£4·80*	*£5·40*
Scotland	46·5	52·6	69·4	77·0
Wales	54·6	62·1	75·9	82·8
England	42·9	49·3	68·3	77·5
Northern Ireland	54·3	59·4	73·9	78·4
Great Britain	43·8	50·2	68·8	77·7

Source: New Earnings Survey, Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will estimate the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) England, (iv) Northern Ireland and (v) Great Britain who work part-time.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest information is as follows:

Part-time employees in employment: December 1992

(Thousand)

Not seasonally adjusted	*Males*	*Females*
Scotland	95	436
Wales	60	220
England	1,009	4,025
Northern Ireland	35	107
Great Britain	1,163	4,681

Job Search

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Great Britain took part in *(a)* job clubs, *(b)* job interview guarantee and *(c)* job search seminars in 1990-91; and at what average cost per participant in (i) cash terms and (ii) 1992-93 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Tony Lloyd, dated 14 April 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about Jobclubs, Job Interview Guarantee and job search seminars. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

1,140,774 people joined Jobclubs in 1990-91. The average cost per participant in cash terms, excluding fares to attend Jobclub and VAT, was £141. The cost in 1992-93 prices is £158.

The Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) initiative was not generally available until April 1991 but was piloted in 20 inner city areas from September 1989 to March 1991. During this time 16,661 people were assisted through JIG. The average cost per participant is not available because the pilot phase was not costed separately.

Job search seminars were not introduced until July 1991, therefore the data you request does not exist.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the maximum daily travelling

expenses that can be claimed by unemployed people who participate in job search seminars or in job review workshops when they travel by *(a)* public or *(b)* private transport; whether participants in both schemes are entitled to travel expenses to enable them to attend the follow-up support sessions provided by the seminars and workshops; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fodgen to Ms Clare Short, dated 14 April 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about travel expenses for participants who attend job search seminars and Job Review Workshops.

Both programmes are of short duration, normally lasting two full days with some additional follow up. They are designed to help short term unemployed people find work more quickly. The seminars and workshops are run by organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors, under contract to the Employment Service. People who attend are paid their travelling expenses to the main sessions and to the follow up events. This is done by the programme providers who re-imburse participants the cost of travelling from their homes to the seminar or Workshop. The providers then recover this money from the Employment Service.

Participants are expected to travel by the most cost effective mode of transport, normally standard class public transport. If participants prefer to use their own car or motorcycle they are paid a mileage allowance of 16p per mile provided this is cost effective, for example, where public transport is poor or there is good reason to use a vehicle. Otherwise if they choose to use their own transport they will receive the equivalent public transport cost.

People with a disability problem which affects their mobility may claim travelling expenses at the mileage rate if they wish to use their own private vehicle. They may also be re-imbursed parking fees. Taxi fares will also be paid where a person's disability prevents them using either public transport or private vehicle.

There is no upper limit laid down which states the maximum daily travelling allowance that can be claimed by participants. There is however a network of job search seminar and Job Review Workshop provision throughout the country and we would expect people to be offered places at a convenient location.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Career Development Loans

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people took up career development loans in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the number of people taking out a career development loan in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 is as follows:

	Number
1989-90	5,805
1990-91	8,116
1991-92	10,432

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans her Department has to encourage employers in the London area to adopt or maintain workplace nurseries.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department encourages employers throughout the country to consider family-friendly employment policies including flexible working and help with child care, through publications such as "The Best of Both Worlds". The new out-of-school child care grant delivered by training and enterprise councils will create some 50,000 new child care places for school aged children over the next three years, which may include workplace facilities.

Employment Schemes

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average amount spent per person on *(a)* ET, *(b)* YT, *(c)* the job interview guarantee scheme and *(d)* job clubs for each year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin *[pursuant to his reply, 3 March 1993, c. 209-10]:* I regret that my original reply contained an error. The figures given for the average amount spent per participant on YT for Great Britain given in my reply of 3 March 1993, *Official Report*, col. *209-10;* were incorrect, due to a clerical error. The correct information for the average amount spent per person on employment training (ET), youth training (YT), the job interview guarantee scheme (JIG) and job clubs, in Great Britain, for each year for which figures are available is as follows:

£ thousands

Programme	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
ET	n/a	5,540	5,404	5,384	6,014
YT	n/a	n/a	2,620	2,375	2,735
JIG	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	57
Jobclub	[1]247	[1]190	140	141	147

[1] External Providers (contracted by the Employment Service) only. Figures exclude job clubs run by the Employment Service.

HEALTH

GP Prescribing

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the annual saving achieved in the NHS hospital sector by general practitioners' prescribing of oral contraceptives in respect of prevention of unwanted pregnancies and of abortions;

(2) what assessment she has made of the annual savings achieved in the NHS hospital sector by general practitioners' prescribing of *(a)* anti-hypertensive medicines, *(b)* medicines for treatment of late onset diabetes, *(c)* medicines for treatment of psoriasis and eczema and *(d)* medicines for the treatment of peptic ulcers.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has made no such specific assessment. General practitioners are aware that the cost-effective use of drugs can lead both to better patient care and to financial savings elsewhere in the national health service and in the public sector generally.

Policies on prescribing are designed to encourage such cost-effective prescribing while maintaining the pressure to cut out wasteful expenditure on drugs.

Health Checks

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it remains her policy for automatic health checks to be given to people who reach the age of 75 years; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: It remains policy that family doctors should offer all their patients aged 75 and over an annual health check.

Medicines

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many cases in 1991-92 the licensing authority determined an application for the grant of a licence under the Medicines Act in a way which differed from the advice of the Medicines Commission; and if she will identify each of those cases.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will place in the Library a copy of the Committee on Safety of Medicines' policy on the disclosure of information about adverse drug reactions;

(2) if she will place in the Library a copy of the Medicines Control Agency's policy on disclosure of information.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Medicines Control Agency has access to company data about medicinal products to carry out its functions under the provisions of the Medicines Act 1968. The Act places a responsibility on Ministers to protect the confidentiality of that information and makes it an offence for anyone to disclose it except in the performance of their duty.

It is the policy of the Medicines Control Agency to maintain the commercial confidentiality of information provided by the pharmaceutical industry and to protect the anonymity of individuals identified in information to which it has access; this applies to information made available to the Committee on Safety of Medicines. Information on adverse drug reactions is disclosed by the agency to doctors, pharmacists and related groups when relevant to specific safety concerns.

Pharmacies

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the effect on small pharmacies of the limit on the rise for 1993-94 in the global amount paid by her Department for pharmaceutical services.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have offered to increase the global sum out of which pharmacists' fees are paid by 1·5 per cent. in 1993-94. This accords with the Government's wider policy on public sector pay. How this money is allocated is a matter for discussion with the pharmacists' representatives. Those discussions are continuing.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what survey her Department has undertaken on the number of pharmacies closing in the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth areas; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Three pharmacies have closed between 1 October 1990 and 30 September 1992.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to her statement of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 1005, when she expects the South West Thames regional health authority to report on its proposals for strengthening accountability of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 31 March at cols. *241-42*.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many outpatients' appointments have been cancelled by the London ambulance service for each month since October 1992.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Martin Gorham, chief executive of the London Ambulance Service, for details.

Drugs

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the 10 established drug substances and six drug classes investigated in 1991-92 because of potential safety hazards not previously recognised; and what are the findings of each of the investigations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested on the potential drug safety hazards investigated by the Medicines Control Agency is as follows:

The six drug classes

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These drugs, used to treat arthritis, can cause rare cases of meningitis of a non-infective origin, and in some patients, kidney damage. The findings of investigations into these issues were published in Current Problems No. 32, issued in October 1991.

Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. Anaphylactoid reactions can occur when patients on ACE inhibitors, undergo renal dialysis with a particular type of dialysis membrane. The findings of an investigation into this issue were published in Current Problems No. 33, issued in February 1992.

Beta-agonists. Following concerns regarding a possible association between the use of beta-agonists in the treatment of patients with asthma and an increase in asthma mortality and morbidity, a Working Party was set up by the Committee on Safety of Medicines to review information on the safety of beta-agonists in asthma patients. They concluded that available evidence did not support a causal link between beta-agonist use and death from asthma. The findings of the Working Party were published in a report published in early 1992, and summarised in Current Problems No. 33, issued in February 1992.

Radiographic contrast media. Concerns have been expressed in Europe regarding the comparative safety of intravascular use of high- and low-osmolar contrast media. After review of the data it was concluded that there was no convincing evidence to suggest a difference between these types of media with respect to life-threatening or fatal reactions. The review has been published in Pharmaceutical Medicine 1993, 7; 47-55.

Quinolones. These antibiotics can cause convulsions in patients with or without a history of epilepsy; this reaction can also be induced by an interaction between these antibiotics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. The findings of an investigation into this issue have been published in Current Problems No. 32, issued in October 1991.

Cephalosporins. These antibiotics can cause rare cases of pseudomembraneous colitis, a severe inflammatory condition of the colon. The findings of an investigation into this issue have been published in Current Problems No. 32, issued in October 1991.

The 10 drug substances

Gadolinium. Concern was raised from in vitro studies that gadolinium (Magnevist), a radiographic contrast medium, could affect viral infectivity. After review of the data it was concluded that the findings were unlikely to have relevance to the in vivo use of the agent.

Vitamin K. Concern arose from epidemiological studies reporting an association between intramuscular administration of vitamin K to newborn babies and the subsequent development of childhood cancer. After review of the studies the Committee on Safety of Medicines concluded that there was insufficient evidence to support the conclusions reached in the study. A letter was sent to all doctors by the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Nursing Officer in December 1992 informing them about this matter. This issue is being kept under review.

Terodiline. This drug, used in the treatment of urinary incontinence, can cause rare but serious disturbances of cardiac rhythm. As a result of an investigation into this issue, the Chairman of the Committee on Safety of Medicines wrote to all doctors, dentists and pharmacists in July 1991, informing them of their findings. Following further reports of such reactions, the drug was withdrawn voluntarily by the pharmaceutical company. The findings of the review of the data were published in Current Problems Number 32, issued in October 1991.

Triazolam (Halcion). This drug is used in the short-term treatment of severe insomnia. Following a review of the data by the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) this drug was withdrawn from the market in the United Kingdom in October 1991 and all doctors, dentists and pharmacists were informed by a letter from the Chairman of the CSM. The manufacturer of Halcion has appealed against the proposed action to revoke the product licences for Halcion, this matter is still under appeal.

Atenolol. Concern was raised by an epidemiological study which revealed that men receiving antenolo, had a higher death rate from cancer than those receiving diuretic or placebo. On review of the data it was concluded that it was unlikely that atenolol treatment was causally associated with increased cancer mortality in men and no action was considered necessary. This issue has been kept under review and the decision has been lent further support by two further studies which failed to find an association between atenolol treatment and increased cancer mortality.

Fenfluramine and dexfenfluramine. These drugs can cause the rare but serious adverse effect of pulmonary hypertension. The findings of an investigation into this issue were published in Current Problems Number 34, issued in June 1992. An epidemiological study is underway to investigate this matter further.

Carbimazole. This drug, used in the treatment of hyperthyroidism, can cause rare cases of serious white blood cell disorders. The findings of an investigation into this issue were published in Current Problems No. 32, issued in October 1991.

Flecainide. This drug, used in the treatment of cardiac rhythm disorders, can cause rare long-term adverse effects on the eyes, lungs or nervous system. The findings of an investigation into this issue were published in Current Problems No. 31, issued in June 1991.

Omeprazole. This drug, used in the treatment of peptic ulcers, can cause skin rashes, diarrhoea and headache, which can be severe. The findings of an investigation into these side effects were published in Current Problems No. 31, issued in June 1991.

Flucloxacillin. This antibiotic can cause jaundice. The findings of an investigation into this issue were published in Current Problems No. 35, issued in November 1992.

Copies of all the publications referred to will be placed in the Library.

Child Health Services

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) to what extent hospitals are meeting the guidelines suggested in "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital" regarding *(a)* the provision of a named nurse for each child admitted, *(b)* the provision of accommodation for parents of children admitted to hospital, *(c)* education and play facilities for children, *(d)* separate facilities for adolescents and *(e)* the provision of separate facilities for children in (i) accident and emergency departments and (ii) out-patients departments;

(2) what plans she has for monitoring child health services; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what progress is being made towards ensuring that all children admitted to hospital are accommodated in separate wards.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally. A recent study by the Audit Commission, "Children First" (HMSO 1993), concluded that the standards set in our good practice guide, "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital" have not been fully implemented. We intend to address this through the review procedure whereby the national health service management executive holds health authorities to account for specified aspects of their performance.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to reduce inequalities in child health.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's approach to variations in the health of children and other groups was set out in "The Health of the Nation" Green and White Papers (Cm. 1523 and 1986), copies of which are available in the Library. The five key areas include accidents as the most common cause of death in children over the age of one year, but the White Paper recognises that in other fields too success with children will be crucial to the long-term success of the strategy.

Our aim is to reduce variations by tackling specific issues and needs which can be targeted for effective action. Examples of such action within the field of child health include national and local initiatives to reduce perinatal death, including cot deaths, which area is already showing significant results; improved immunisation, already at record levels, to ensure protection against death and disability from preventable disease; and increased participation by general practitioners in child health surveillance, thereby providing screening and health promotion for children individually as part of integrated family health care.

In making such changes, the Government will continue to make the best use of improved arrangements for the delivery of health care. We have provided guidance and are undertaking monitoring to support health authorities in assessing children's health care needs locally, and in integrating family, community and hospital services.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that children engaged in sufficient levels of physical activity to establish good health in later life.

Mr. Sackville: We have recently announced the setting up of a "Health of the Nation" task force on physical activity which will consider how to encourage people to

obtain lifelong benefits from such activity. The task force will be able to build on the Government's recent initiative whereby physical education is a compulsory subject for all pupils in maintained schools between the ages of five to 16. It serves to give young people a knowledge of the long-term benefits of a healthy lifestyle and encourages the practice of health-related exercise.

NHS Pay

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has made to managers of trust hospitals in Leeds concerning pay awards for *(a)* professional and technical staff and *(b)* nursing staff;

(2) what guidelines have been provided to trust hospitals concerning pay awards for ancillary workers.

Dr. Mawhinney: A copy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's letter of 12 November 1992 to chairmen of all health service-employing bodies which set out arrangements for implementing the policy of public sector pay restraint throughout the national health service, is available in the Library. We have made no specific representations to Leeds NHS trusts. Management guidance has been issued by the chief executive of the national health service management executive relating to all staff in health authorities and trusts.

Child Psychologists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child psychologists were working in the NHS in each of the last five years, by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Drugs (Side-effects)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to establish a national computer record of the side-effects of drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: Such a computer record already exists. Under the yellow card scheme introduced in 1964, doctors are requested to report suspected adverse drug reactions, and pharmaceutical companies have a statutory requirement to report these reactions to the licensing authority. Such reports are entered on to a computer database operated by the Medicines Control Agency. In 1991, a new computer system, adverse drug reactions on-line information tracking—ADROIT—was introduced to improve the speed and effectiveness of monitoring adverse drug reactions.

Female Circumcision

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Redcar, Ms Mowlam of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *322*, what further guidance she plans to issue to GPs on female circumcision.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Special Health Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the budget of each special health authority for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the projected distribution of funds for these authorities for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: The budget allocations for 1992-93 and 1993-94 for special health authorities are given in the table. The figures include both capital and revenue.

SHA (see notes	*1992-93 (£ million)*	*1993-94 (£ million)*
Central Blood Laboratory Authority/ National Blood Authority (CBLA/NBA)	4·550	8·649
NHS Supplies Authority	20·767	16·630
UK Transplant Special Services Authority (UKTSSA)	4·479	5·372
Bethlem Royal & Maudsley (BR&M)	36·366	36·643
Eastman Dental Hospital (EDH)	9·092	9·926
Hammersmith & Queen Charlotte's (& Acton) (HQC)	81·408	83·648
Moorfields Eye Hospital (MEH)	22·111	22·871
Hospitals for Sick Children (Gt Ormond St & Queen Elizabeth's) (HSC)	61·467	67·653
National Heart & Lung Hospitals (Brompton & London Chest) (NH&LH)	52·245	50·562
National Hospitals for Neurology & Neurosurgery (Queen Square, Maida Vale, Finchley & Chalfont) (NHNN)	41·356	37·307
Royal Marsden Hospital (Fulham & Sutton) (RMH)	38·085	39·982

The figures for UKTSSA do not include money allocated to the SHA for reimbursement of donor hospitals as the money does not contribute to the running costs of the organisation. The HA in effect manages the funds used to reimburse donor hospitals for maintaining cadavers prior to transplantation, for the Department.
The figures for 1992-93 are subject to validation by audit. The figures for 1993-94 are initial allocations, which will be added to by in-year adjustment, as appropriate.
Figures for 1994-95 cannot be projected at this early stage.
The CBLA became the NBA with effect from 1 April 1993.

Hepatitis B

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's estimate of the number of hepatitis B carriers in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: It is estimated that about one person per 1,000 of the population in the United Kingdom is a carrier of hepatitis B. This proportion is unlikely to have changed significantly over the past five years. The number of cases of hepatitis B has been falling over the same period and was at the lowest level recorded in 1991, the latest year for which figures are available, at 517 cases.

NHS Information

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 March, *Official Report*, column *751*, how information is classified as validated; and what other kinds of information are held by the NHS management executive but not regarded as information held centrally.

Dr. Mawhinney: Validated information is that which has been checked by the Department for accuracy,

consistency and statistical reliability. The national health service management executive also holds a disparate range of administrative and management data obtained from a number of sources which may not be compiled on a comparable basis or use common definitions, or which may contain subjective judgments.

NHS Pay Award

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effects upon recruitment to the national health service of the 1·5 per cent. pay award.

Dr. Mawhinney: We do not expect recruitment or retention of national health service staff to be adversely affected.

Child Protection Teams

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child protection teams were working in the NHS in each of the last five years, by region.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not available centrally. The organisation of child protection teams and the planning of the investigations is a matter for local authority social services departments and police, with other agencies which have specialist knowledge such as medical services with the national health service.

Drug Licences

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average test period for new drugs granted a licence in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other EC states.

Dr. Mawhinney: For the period January 1992 to December 1992, the average gross time taken to grant a product licence for new drugs was 17 months.

Comparable statistics for other EC states are not available.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to conduct an inquiry into the numbers and causes of deaths among patients on waiting lists for national health service treatment.

Mr. Sackville: None. Patients may die from a wide range of causes, in common with the rest of the population, while waiting for non-urgent treatment. Emergencies are always treated immediately and patients who need urgent treatment are given priority.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: There have been none so far as the Department of Health is concerned.

Paediatric Waiting Lists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide details of paediatric waiting lists for each of the last five years by region.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by speciality is given in "Hospital Waiting Lists, In-patients and Day Cases", published twice a year, copies of which are available in the Library.

Child Accident Prevention

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is being spent by her Department on child accident prevention in the current financial year.

Mr. Yeo: The cost of the accident prevention work carried out within the national health service cannot be precisely calculated. In 1992-93 we awarded a grant of £103,000 per year for three years to the Child Accident Prevention Trust towards its central administrative costs. In 1993-94 we have awarded the trust a project grant of £10,000 per year for three years towards the cost of a project to promote the adoption of accident prevention measures by health and local authorities.

GP Fund Holders

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the up-to-date guidance given to GP fund holders about how they construct their budget.

Dr. Mawhinney: Budget setting guidance was issued in November 1992 under cover of EL (92)83. A copy is available in the Library.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the guidelines for the financial arrangements governing GP fund holders were last updated.

Dr. Mawhinney: The updated general practitioner fund holder manual of accounts was issued in March 1993.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that GP fund holders' budgets and accounts are kept in a common form.

Dr. Mawhinney: The general practitioner fund holder manual of accounts sets out the accounting rules to be followed by all fund holders. It includes common formats for monthly budget monitoring reports and annual accounts.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued by her Department to general practitioners wishing to become fund holders with regard to prior consultation with the patients of the practice concerned.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what audit her Department has carried out to assess the quality of patient care administered by general practitioner fund-holding practices and non-fund holding practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: Every family health services authority was required to establish a medical audit advisory group by 1 April 1991 to direct, co-ordinate and monitor medical audit activities within all general medical practices in its area. In exercising their purchasing role, general practitioner fund holders are also subject to monitoring and scrutiny by regional health authorities, which are responsible for the management of the fund-holding scheme.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has received from the Audit Commission in relation to its study of GP fund-holding in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: Apart from discharging its statutory audit responsibility, the Audit Commission did not undertake a study of general practitioner fund-holding in 1991-92.

Hip Replacement

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to issue advice to patients regarding the most reliable hip replacement implants;

(2) which hip replacement implants which have been used in the NHS in the last 14 years have the highest *(a)* failure rate and *(b)* success rate.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the outcome of hip replacement operations is not available centrally. It is the responsibility of clinicians to give advice to patients on the various types of hip implants available, based upon the individual needs of the patient.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what tests are carried out on hip replacement implants before they can be marketed.

Mr. Sackville: There are no statutory requirements for the marketing of hip replacements implants.

Since 1986, hip implants have been controlled by the voluntary Department of Health manufacturer registration scheme, which requires that new designs should undergo appropriate testing prior to their release for general sale. There are currently 27 registered manufacturers of hip implants and the vast majority of these products implanted in the United Kingdom are from registered sources.

From 1 January 1995, the European directive on medical devices will place the control of hip implants on a formal statutory basis, and manufacturers will be required to submit details of manufacturing and design to third party assessment.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a national register of hip replacements and revisions to provide an accurate measure of revision rate.

Mr. Sackville: We have no such plans. The national reporting and investigation centre, part of the Department, investigates problems with medical devices notified to them by clinicians.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of hip replacement operations carried out in the last 14 years have required revision.

Mr. Sackville: It is not possible to identify precisely what proportion of operations required revision, but in 1989-90 and 1990-91 respectively, an estimated 9·6 per cent. and 9·5 per cent. of hip joint replacements were revisions.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study she has made of the legal settlement reached by Theresa Aspinall and Wigan council in regard to the council's statutory duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; what steps she is taking to draw the implications of this case and the settlement for other disabled people to the attention of other local authorities with legal duties under the Act; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We have seen a report of this case, indicating that the difficulties have now been resolved. Local authorities are fully aware of their duties under the 1970 Act.

Wessex RHA (Computers)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on Government policy on the development of the RISP project by Wessex regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: As the district auditor made clear in his report published in July 1992, the RISP project was characterised by a lack of project and management control. The Government accept this judgment, as does Wessex regional health authority, which has taken extensive remedial action.

The Department launched a national information management and technology strategy in December 1992. A key component is the need for health authorities to assess all proposed IT investment against an approved criteria to ensure that future IM and T investment obtains value for money.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the state of discussions between her Department and the Wessex regional health authority on the RISP project.

Mr. Sackville: Officials from the Department continue to have discussions with Wessex regional health authority on a range of matters including RISP, which was abandoned in April 1990.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library all correspondence from Ministers to the Wessex regional health authority on the subject of RISP from 1 January 1989 to the present; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: A copy of the correspondence has been placed in the Library.

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a list of the membership of the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs indicating the area of medical expertise of each member.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of the members and their areas of medical expertise are:

Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs Membership

Name	*Position*
Chairman	
Dr. J. S. Metters	Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health.
Members	
Professor A. M. Breckenridge	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Liverpool.
Professor C. M. Castleden	Professor of Medicine for the Elderly, University of Leicester.
Mr. D. L. Coleman	Community pharmacist, Norfolk.
Professor H. D. Edmondson	Professor of Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine, Dental School, University of Birmingham.
Dr. P. R. Fellows	General Practitioner, Gloucestershire, Chairman of Gloucester LMC.
Professor D. Ganderton	Visiting Professor in pharmacy, King's College, London. Chairman of the British Pharmacopoeia Commission.
Miss A. F. Glasier	Consultant gynaecologist, Director of Family Planning, Lothian Health Board.
Dr. C. Grattan	Consultant dermatologist, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.
Dr. G. Hargreaves	Former GP with experience of the Pharmaceutical Industry.
Dr. I. C. Heath	General Practitioner, London.
Professor S. Holgate	Specialist in allergic disorders, Southampton University.
Dr. D. F. Jones	General Practitioner, South Wales.
Professor R. M. Jones	Professor of Anaesthetics, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London.
Mr. A. G. Kerr	Consultant ENT surgeon, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.
Mrs. S. Noyce	Pharmacist adviser to Sefton FHSA.
Dr. E. M. E. Poskitt	Senior Lecturer in Child Health, Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital.
Dr. S. J. Richards	General Practitioner, Exeter.
Dr. C. H. Swan	Consultant physician (gastro-enterology) City General Hospital, Stoke-on-Trent.
Professor P. J. Tyrer	Professor of Community Psychiatry, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London.
Dr. D. M. B. Ward	General Practitioner, Glasgow.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the chairs, executive and non-executive members of English regional health authorities, indicating *(a)* the gender of each member and *(b)* which members are direct appointments by the Secretary of State.

Dr. Mawhinney: All chairmen and non-executive members of the 14 English regional health authorities are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and are as follows. The appointment of executive members is a matter for regional health authorities.

Northern
Mr. P. D. Carr (Chairman)
Mr. A. G. Brown
Professor Michael Rawlins
Mr. R. C. Spoor
Ms J. Flanagan
Vacancy

Yorkshire
Sir Bryan Askew (Chairman)
Mr. J. A. Fergusson
Professor Stanley Brown
Mrs. J. A. Barden
Mr. M. A. J. Morgan
Vacancy

Trent
Sir Michael Carlisle (Chairman)
Mr. M. Dassau
Dr. Kenneth Edwards
Mrs. P. B. Wildgoose
Mr. G. R. H. Clemons
Mr. D. Bertram

East Anglia
Sir Colin Walker (Chairman)
Mrs. J. L. Hopwood
Professor Sir David Peters
Mr. J. B. Mowson
Mr. L. Rice
Mrs. S. E. Sida-Lockett

North West Thames
Sir William Doughty (Chairman)
Mr. D. Bucks
Mrs. J. B. Hanham
Mrs. E. J. Davies
Professor Stewart Sutherland
Mr. J. Taylor

North East Thames
Sir William Staveley (Chairman)
Maj. Gen. R. P. W. Wall
Mr. P. Holwell
Baroness Gardner of Parkes
Dr. Mollie McBride
Vacancy

South East Thames
Mr. P. W. Barker (Chairman)
Mr. A. J. L. Barnes
Mr. I. D. Gainsford
Mrs. J. Rodin
Mr. R. F. Holland
Mrs. W. Mitchell

South West Thames
Professor Marian Hicks (Chairman)
Dr. Memos Spathis
Mr. J. R. Harris
Mr. G. J. Howe
Mrs. M. McNaughton
Vacancy

Wessex
Sir Robin Buchanan (Chairman)
Mrs. J. Perons
Mrs. F. Sheldon
Mr. R. C. Donnelly
Mr. A. S. D. Service
Mr. P. A. Waring

Oxford
Dr. J. S. Burgess (Chairman)
Mr. P. D. M. Gell
Professor Sir David Weatherall
Mr. C. J. N. Ward
Mrs. V. Rubenstein
Mr. W. A. Rooke

South Western
Ms R. Fritchie (Chairman)
Mr. D. F. Strachan
Sir John Kingman
Mr. U. A. Woodburn
Dame Margaret Fry
Vacancy

West Midlands
Sir Donald Wilson (Chairman)
Mr. B. Stoten
Professor Sir Michael Thompson
Mr. E. M. Worley
Mr. T. D. Morris
Ms J. Cravos

Mersey
Professor A. M. Breckenridge (Chairman)
Mrs. R. H. Hawley
Mr. J. R. Halliday
Mr. B. Jenkins
Mrs. J. Timms
Vacancy

North Western
Sir Bruce Martin (Chairman)
Professor Robert Boyd
Dr. Arup Banerjee
Professor Janet Finch
2 Vacancies

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will conduct an urgent review of the funding arrangements of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Mr. Yeo: We have no plans at present to conduct such a review.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 February, to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam Lady Olga Maitland, *Official Report*, column *202*, if she will make it a requirement to register patients suffering from schizophrenia.

Mr. Yeo: We have no plans for this type of registration. District health authorities, in collaboration with local social services departments, are required to initiate individually tailored care programmes for all in-patients about to be discharged from mental illness hospitals and all new patients accepted by the specialist psychiatric services.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what communications she has had with the World Health Organisation on schizophrenia.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has regular contact with the World Health Organisation to discuss issues of common concern and exchange information on mental health issues including schizophrenia.

Care Providers

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to establish minimum national standards of care for care providers.

Mr. Yeo: Standards in social care are set in legislation, in codes of practice and formal guidance, and increasingly through contract specification. There are no plans to replace this wide range of controls with a single set of national minimum standards.

Community Care

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to monitor the way community care is being implemented in practice;

(2) if she has any plans to review the amount of money that has been allocated to local authorities to provide community care.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 10 November 1992, column *772*.

Health Visitors

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what security measures will be adopted to protect health visitors who visit drug or alcohol users in their homes as part of the community care programme; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The security measures provided to support health visitors in the course of their employment are a matter for their employing authorities. We would expect procedures to be agreed locally to take account of all potentially dangerous situations.

Hospital Services

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken or commissioned by her Department or the NHS management executive on the possibility of charging for any hospital services.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to monitor the availability of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services following the full implementation of community care.

Mr. Yeo: Goldsmiths' college has been commissioned to undertake a special exercise to monitor the impact of community care on independent sector providers of services to alcohol and drugs misusers. Monthly progress reports will ensure that the Government have information on how these service providers will be affected by the implementation of community care.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is taking to ensure that guidance issued by her Department to local authorities regarding assessment, admission and fast track procedures for people with drug and alcohol problems is being adhered to.

Mr. Yeo: Two guidance circulars have been issued to local authorities which address the needs of this client group: LAC(93)2, which encourages local authorities to pay particular attention to the needs of alcohol and drug misusers within community care, and LAC(93)7, which addresses the question of local authority responsibility for clients whose "ordinary residence" is in their area.

In addition we have asked the local authority associations to collaborate with independent sector providers in the development of good practice advice on fast track assessment and out-of-area referrals. This was circulated to local authorities on 26 March 1993.

The performance of local authorities in implementing community care is being monitored by the social services inspectorate.

Needs Assessment

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to rescind guidelines that were issued to local authorities that the extent of a person's needs should not be assessed unless those needs could be met.

Mr. Yeo: No such guidelines have been issued.

Miss Gibelli

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what inquiries she has made into the circumstances under which Miss Gibelli *(a)* was taken into a public house and *(b)* escaped whilst on a visit to the ideal home exhibition while under the secure custody of her Department.

Mr. Yeo: As soon as officials from the national health service management executive were made aware of these events they contacted clinicians and managers and obtained full details of the circumstances of the two incidents referred to. Ministers have been kept informed.

AIDS

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much each London borough bid for AIDS support grant for 1993-94; and how much they were awarded.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. For comparison purposes, details of 1992-93 allocations are also provided.

	1993-94 Bid £	*1993-94 Allocation* £	*1992-93 Allocation* £
Barking and Dagenham	28,396	28,000	32,236
Barnet	45,277	40,000	40,000
Bexley	47,643	46,000	46,000
Brent	429,500	400,000	400,000
Bromley	43,260	30,000	10,500
Camden	745,396	745,000	730,000
City of London	49,990	47,000	47,000
Croydon	88,406	49,000	49,000
Ealing	311,200	290,000	290,000
Enfield	74,170	50,000	50,000
Greenwich	348,025	190,000	190,000
Hackney	549,200	468,000	460,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,155,000	1,155,000	1,129,000
Haringey	593,522	562,000	500,000
Harrow	45,960	42,000	42,000
Havering	16,100	16,000	—
Hillingdon	369,330	120,000	120,000
Hounslow	423,967	320,000	320,000
Islington	475,693	360,000	360,000
Kensington and Chelsea	1,041,000	988,000	970,000
Kingston Upon Thames	43,871	43,000	64,000
Lambeth	1,341,600	948,000	930,000
Lewisham	299,000	245,000	240,000
Merton	118,146	66,000	66,000
Newham	411,248	300,000	250,000
Redbridge	56,371	30,000	15,374
Richmond Upon Thames	225,000	220,000	200,000
Southwark	451,200	355,000	300,000
Sutton	67,916	57,000	57,000
Tower Hamlets	609,300	500,000	481,000
Waltham Forest	288,680	140,000	135,000
Wandsworth	215,614	190,000	188,000
Westminster	988,838	958,000	940,000

Administrative Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the administrative costs in each of the national health service regions in each year since 1987-88 *(a)* in cash prices, *(b)* in 1987-88 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of total expenditure.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 17 March 1993]:* Figures for headquarters administration for hospital and community health services in England have been placed in the Library.

The figures for 1991-92 are provisional and are not comparable with those for earlier years. They include health authorities' expenditure on the purchaser function and, for some regions, other significant costs.

Wolds Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prison service practice or procedures are not required to be followed by the contractor under the terms of the contract of HM prison Wolds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April 1993.

PRISON SERVICE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES AT HM PRISON WOLDS

The Secretary of State has asked me to write to you directly in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking which Prison Service practices or procedures do not have to be followed by the contractor at HM Prison Wolds.

2. In response to an earlier Question answered on 23 March, the Minister of State supplied you with a list of Prison Service practices and procedures which Wolds management **must** follow under the contract. The contractor is bound by the Prison Act 1952, the Criminal Justice Act 1991, the Prison Rules 1964 as amended and the contract. But beyond those items listed in the earlier reply, which are mandatory under the contract, he does not have to follow any other Prison Service practices or procedures. These are numerous and are contained in standing orders, circular instructions, various manuals and other forms of advice to governors. I am afraid that we do not have a consolidated compilation of all this material and it would not be practicable to list it all out. It is up to contractors to draw up their own such instructions.

Foreign Nationals

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals were held *(a)* on remand and *(b)* sentenced in each prison in March; what proportion of these were men; and how many came from (i) Nigeria, (ii) Ghana, (iii) other African countries, (iv) Columbia, (v) other South and Central American countries, (vi) India, (vii) Pakistan, (viii) Bangladesh, (ix) the Irish Republic, (x) the United States of America, (xi) the Netherlands, (xii) other European countries, (xiii) the middle east and (xiv) Jamaica.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April 1993.

I have been asked to reply to your question about the numbers of unconvicted and sentenced men and women in our prisons broken down by nationality.

The latest available provisional figures are for 28 February and are given in the table, which has been placed in the Library.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals were in British prisons for drug-related offences in March; and what proportion this represents of all those in prison for drugs-related offences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April 1993.

I have been asked to reply to your question about foreign nationals in British prisons for drugs-related offences.

The latest available provisional figures are for 28 February and cover just over 90 per cent. of the prison population. On that date about 680 foreign nationals were recorded centrally as being under sentence for drugs offences in England and Wales, excluding any where drugs offences were not the principal offence. They accounted for 27 per cent. of the total population under sentence for drugs offences. The nationality of some further 70 prisoners under sentence for drugs offences was not recorded.

Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to implement the recommendation in the Woolf report that there should be a new prison rule that no establishment should hold prisoners in excess of its certified normal accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question, for priority written answer on 14 April, on the implementation of the Woolf report recommendation on overcrowding.

The recommendation was for there to be a Prison Rule that no establishment should hold more prisoners than is provided for in its certified normal level of accommodation, with provision for Parliament to be informed if exceptionally there is to be a material departure from that rule. It was decided however that it would not be practicable to operate such a system at this stage. Instead the Prison Service has improved the overcrowding information provided for Parliament (see annexes 4 and 5 of the Report of the Work of the Prison Service April 1991-March 1992, cm 2087).

As the white paper on Custody, Care and Justice (cm 1647) explained, the Prison Service plans to provide an estate able to operate in equilibrium without particular prisons or areas suffering from overcrowding. A significant improvement in the situation has already taken place. There are at present nearly 3,000 vacancies in the estate as a whole. Overcrowding is now largely confined to the older local prisons and remand centres and further expansion of this part of the estate is planned. In addition the actual level of overcrowding being experienced has been greatly reduced in recent years. The Prison Service's business plan also includes a commitment to end trebling in cells by the end of March 1994.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* Indian, *(b)* Pakistani, *(c)* Bangladeshi, *(d)* Afro-Caribbean and *(e)* other ethnic minority people were (i) on remand and (ii) sentenced in each prison in March; and how many in each case were (x) men and (y) women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April 1993.

I have been asked to reply to your question about numbers of unconvicted and convicted men and women in our prisons broken down by nationality.

The latest available provisional figures are for 28 February and are given in the table which has been placed in the Library.

Woolf Report

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to date to implement the recommendations of the Woolf report; and what steps he intends to take to implement its outstanding recommendations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April 1993.

Implementation of the Woolf Report

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Question about the steps taken to implement the recommendations of the Woolf Report.

The Government's response to the Woolf Report is set out in its White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" (Cm 1647), published in September 1991. This described an ambitious programme of reforms. Our progress in implementing these is set out in the Home Secretary's letter of 8 February responding to Mr. Amess' Question on 14 January, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Our plans for the future are set out in the Prison Service's Corporate Plan, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. This makes it clear that one of the Service's key themes for the next three years will be the implementation of futher reforms flowing from the White Paper.

Re-offenders

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about re-offending rates for *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have served a prison sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Information on reconviction rates of those who have served a prison sentence is published regularly. The latest figures can be found in chapter 9 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1989", Cm 1221. Of those discharged in 1986, 63 per cent. of male young offenders. 42 per cent. of adult males and 34 per cent. of adult females were convicted of a further standard list offence within two years of release.

Prison Accommodation

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the certified normal level of accommodation for each prison in England and Wales; and what was the actual population for each prison in March.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 April:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question, for priority written answer on 14 April, on CNA and population.

The attached table shows certified normal accommodation (CNA) and population for all Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 31 March 1993.

Establishment CNA and Population figures for 31 March 1993

Establishment	*CNA*	*Population*
Acklington	676	545
Albany	222	241
Aldington	133	81
Ashwell	404	378
Askham Grange	129	81
Aylesbury	241	218
Bedford	170	244
Belmarsh	841	671
Birmingham	638	844
Blantyre House	95	94
Blundeston	338	312
Brinsford	336	386
Bristol	374	418
Brixton	621	633
Brockhill	156	148
Bullingdon	635	433
Bullwood Hall	125	104
Camp Hill	481	327
Canterbury	104	179
Cardiff	328	395
Castington	300	214
Channings Wood	594	502
Chelmsford	244	305
Coldingley	222	129
Cookham Wood	120	104
Dartmoor	560	490
Deerbolt	432	325
Dorchester	136	179
Dover	316	160
Downview	286	279
Drake Hall	255	121
Durham	364	492
East Sutton Park	85	74
Elmley	635	614
Erlestoke	206	203
Everthorpe	228	219
Exeter	317	357
Featherstone	599	549
Feltham	874	731
Finnamore Wood	112	63
Ford	536	389
Frankland	339	297
Full Sutton	494	426
Garth	512	505
Gartree	258	236
Glen Parva	854	702
Gloucester	207	220
Grendon	216	182
Guys Marsh	300	143
Haslar	136	134
Hatfield	180	124
Haverigg	345	318
Hewell Grange	136	154
High Down	485	450
Highpoint	679	525
Hindley	317	305
Hollesley Bay	629	265
Holloway	517	436
Holme House	649	520
Hull	269	358
Huntercombe	240	167
Kingston	104	93
Kirkham	644	465
Kirklevington	30	33
Lancaster	186	241
Lancaster Farms	115	120
Latchmere House	131	122
Leeds	591	816
Leicester	194	318
Lewes	258	334
Leyhill	410	415
Lincoln	444	589
Lindholme	706	569
Littlehey	543	520
Liverpool	931	1,224
Long Lartin	362	334
Low Newton	199	228
Maidstone	513	493
Manchester	291	315
Moorland	641	572
Morton Hall	168	164
The Mount	484	424
New Hall	122	130
North Sea Camp	204	198
Northallerton	146	187
Norwich	429	409
Nottingham	218	210
Onley	456	377
Parkhurst	286	204
Pentonville	695	633
Portland	424	328
Prescoed	20	20
Preston	324	484
Pucklechurch	56	50
Ranby	331	275
Reading	182	174
Risley	692	565
Rochester	303	182
Rudgate	300	279
Send	113	107
Shepton Mallet	158	194
Shrewsbury	168	286
Spring Hill	210	203
Stafford	476	524
Standford Hill	384	325
Stocken	396	387
Stoke Heath	300	275
Styal	180	166
Sudbury	509	432
Swaleside	504	486
Swansea	213	234
Swinfen Hall	167	161

Establishment	CNA	Population
Thorn Cross	240	221
Thorp Arch	166	158
Usk	221	179
The Verne	552	487
Wakefield	662	649
Wandsworth	965	772
Wayland	580	485
Wellingborough	284	282
Werrington	110	106
Wetherby	120	105
Whatton	217	212
Whitemoor	534	469
Winchester	355	329
The Wolds	320	309
Woodhill	492	458
Wormwood Scrubs	472	506
Wymott	816	671

Squatting

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to announce changes to the legislation on squatting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to his question of 3 February at column *203*. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes that he will be in a position to announce his proposals on squatting shortly.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the responses to the consultation paper on squatting.

Mr. Jack: I have already given a general account of the response made to the consultation paper in my reply of 17 June 1992 to a question from the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) at column *522*. Respondents were not asked to agree to publication when their comments were invited. It would not therefore be appropriate to publish the 216 replies which we received.

Police Training College

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what would be the security implications of contracting out the police training college; and what safeguards would be introduced.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Careful consideration will be given to any security implications before a decision is made to contract out any of the services which are currently provided by the police staff college.

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff who have in the past been employed in the market testing unit at the Home Office and who were involved in the commissioning of the Coopers and Lybrand study of 1992 into businesses suitable for market testing now work for Coopers and Lybrand; and when those appointments were referred to the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are aware of only one, whose appointment was referred under the normal procedures to my right hon. and learned Friend in October 1992. The civil service cannot apply blanket bans of the subsequent employment of people who leave the civil service but if the hon. Member is seeking to imply that there was anything irregular or unusual in this case I strongly refute that implication.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given since 3 February to whether the 1993-94 market testing programme should continue in its originally planned form.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A provisional Home Office market testing programme for 1993-94 has been drawn up. Once the details have been finalised, we will make an announcement in the summer.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the provisional market testing list for the period September 1993 to March 1995; and what is the current annual cost of each function.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. I intend to announce in the summer the Home Office programme for the period October 1993 to September 1994.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps will be taken to ensure that operation and financial matters of any function will remain accountable to Parliament in the event of the contracting out of any Home Office function during the market testing period September 1993 to March 1995.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to respect for commercial confidentiality, contracting out does not affect accountability to Parliament for services provided by the Home Office.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation there has been with Home Office unions since the market testing initiative of January 1992; whether the Home Office has published a code of practice on market testing consultation; and whether the first draft of any such document has been issued to the staff associations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There have been consultations with Home Office unions, including a meeting of the market testing sub-committee of the Home Office departmental Whitley Council. A draft code of practice has been produced and consultation with the unions continues.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effect of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the Home Office functions that are to be market tested during 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We consult Home Office legal advisers as necessary about the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a comprehensive list of all Home Office functions which will be market tested during 1993 and 1994; and if he will give details of the savings he expects to make or has set as a target.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have drawn up a provisional Home Office market testing programme for 1993-94, but I

propose to consider it further before finalising it. The functions being market tested to 30 September 1993 were published on 25 November 1992 in the "Citizen's Charter First Report: 1992".

Contracting Out

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost to the Home Office of defending the judicial review in respect of the contracting out of prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The application by Kent county council for judicial review of decisions taken by the Department on competitive tendering for the future provision of education services in prison establishments in England and Wales has yet to be heard. To date, additional legal costs of just over £8,000 have been incurred by the prison service in connection with the action.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed in the market testing unit at the Home Office for the latest date available; and how may of them are legally trained.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On Tuesday 6 April 1993 the equivalent of 41·7 full-time staff were employed in the Home Office market testing unit. None has any legal training but they consult Home Office legal staff as necessary on legal problems.

Police National Computer

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what would be the security implications of contracting out the police national computer organisation; and what safeguards would be introduced.

Mr. Charles Wardle: If, as a result of the market testing programme, the operation of the Hendon data centre, which is responsible for maintaining the police national computer service, is contracted out, the contract will be placed only with an organisation which is able to maintain at least the present levels of security. The security requirements will be specified in detail if and when bids for the contract are invited.

Emergency Planning Strategy

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend London's emergency planning strategy; and what plans he has to give the LFCDA extra emergency planning powers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Draft new civil defence regulations were published last December and comments received are being considered. We have no plans to give the LFCDA extra emergency planning powers.

Emergency plans are drawn up locally by the emergency services, local authorities and other agencies where necessary. The authorities in London have recently agreed, and published, a major disaster plan.

Somali Asylum Seekers

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the total numbers of Somali asylum seekers for each of the past three years who have *(a)* been granted refugee status, *(b)* been given exceptional leave and *(c)* leave pending his consideration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1990-92 (excluding dependants) on applications for asylum by Somali nationals, and on decisions, is given in the table. No applicant is required to leave the United Kingdom until his case has been decided.

Applications by Somali nationals for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and decisions, 1990 to 1992

Number of principal applicants

	Applications received			*Decisions*[1]						
	Total applications	*Applied at Port*	*Applied in country*	*Total decisions*	*Recognised as refugee and granted asylum*	*Not recognised as refugee, but granted exceptional leave*[2]	*Total refused*	*Refusals*		
								Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination	*Refused on safe third country grounds*[3]	*Refused under para 101 of Immigration Rules*[4,5]
Year										
1990	1,920	1,440	475	380	280	75	25	25	. .	. .
1991	1,995	910	1,085	380	160	180	45	20	20	. .
[6]1992	1,575	890	685	2,550	25	2,210	320	*	50	270

[1] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.
[2] Where it would have been unreasonable or impractical to seek to enforce return to country of origin.
[3] Figures from 1 January 1991 only. Prior to this, these refusals are included in the column "Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination".
[4] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity.
[5] Figures from 1 December 1991 only. Prior to this, these refusals are included in the column "Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination".
[6] At end 1992, 2,755 applications were outstanding.

Figures rounded to the nearest 5 with * = 1 or 2, and . . = not separately identifiable.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dependants of Somali asylum seekers have been granted residence in the United Kingdom *(a)* within the rules and *(b)* exceptionally for each of the past three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on acceptances for settlement of dependants of persons who had applied for asylum is not identified separatley in the statistics.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am aware of none so far as the Home Office is concerned.

Burglaries

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 1101, if he will give details of the 90 per cent. reduction in burglary in the Sparkbrook area that he quoted.

Mr. Jack: The reduction in question occurred on the Primrose estate in the hon. member's constituency. I regret that I mistakenly referred to Sparkbrook in my previous answer.

Child Abuse

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to amend the provisions in the Criminal Justice Acts concerning video-taped evidence in child abuse cases;

(2) how many representations he has received concerning the use of video-taped evidence in child abuse hearings.

Mr. Jack: Since October 1992, section 54 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 has allowed for video recordings of interviews with children to be admitted as evidence-in-chief in certain criminal proceedings. My Department regularly receives requests for advice both orally and in writing about the operation of this provision. The general impression which they give is that the changes introduced by the Act command widespread support. We have also recently received representations from the NSPCC generally about the needs of abused children in the legal process.

Although we have no present plans to amend the Act, we have commissioned independent research into the use of video recorded evidence from children in criminal proceedings. We will review the current law in the light of the results of that research and of any representations made to us.

Safer Cities

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if local authorities are being encouraged to apply for safer city project funding.

Mr. Jack: In areas which have safer cities projects, local authorities may apply for grant support to assist with the implementation of local crime prevention initiatives. The safer cities progress report for 1991-92 shows that, since grant funding began in April 1989, £5·3 million out of a total of £16 million has been paid to local authorities for this purpose.

It is the Government's intention to expand the safer cities programme in line with my statement of 7 January. I am not yet in a position to provide further details of the arrangements for the next phase. However, I would expect local authorities to continue to benefit from safer cities grant funding.

Domestic Fires

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of fires have occurred in *(a)* furnished rented accommodation in a single family dwelling and *(b)* furnished accommodation in houses in multiple occupation since March 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not collected in the form requested. The table gives the available information on dwelling fires attended by local authority fire brigades in the United Kingdom from April 1988 to the end of 1991.

Table
Dwelling fires attended by local authority fire brigades[1] in the United Kingdom by occupancy
April-December 1988, 1989-91

Year	*Single occupier dwellings[2,3]*	*Multiple occupation Houses[2]*	*Other dwellings[3]*
April-December 1988	26,084	4,411	13,665
1989	34,947	6,466	19,048
1990	33,535	6,433	18,895
1991[4]	33,876	6,466	19,166

[1] *Source:* Home Office Fire Statistics, based on reports from local authority fire brigades.
[2] Includes detached, semi-detached and terraced houses.
[3] Includes flats and maisonettes, etc.
[4] 1991 is the latest year for which data are available.

Body Searches

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of methods for the detection of weapons, metal implements, drugs or explosives concealed within a person's clothing or body as an alternative to strip searching.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The police scientific development branch, on behalf of the Home Office, has carried out extensive research into the effectiveness of metal detectors. A hand-held search tool exists which will locate metal objects which are concealed under clothing when run over the body of a fully clothed person. However, trials have shown that this machine is unable to detect syringe needles and the police scientific development branch has been commissioned to consider a design for a hand-held device which will be capable of detecting them.

There are methods to detect whether people have been in contact with explosives or drugs, but these do not establish whether an individual is still in possession of them.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Eight.

American Visitors (Ethical Beliefs)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to question passengers on arrival from the USA on their ethical beliefs, and to deny entry to any person who sanctions the use of violence in pursuit of their anti-abortion beliefs.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not generally the practice of the immigration service to question passengers about their ethical beliefs and it would be both oppressive and

impractical to require them routinely to do so. The immigration rules provide that a passenger requiring leave to enter, except the wife or child under 18 of a person settled in the United Kingdom, may be refused entry on the ground that his exclusion is conducive to the public good. This may arise either because my right hon. and learned Friend has personally so directed or where, from information available to the immigration officer, it seems right to refuse leave to enter on that ground. These powers will continue to be exercised in appropriate cases.

Entry Decisions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make it his practice to disclose the reasons why individual passengers have been admitted, or refused entry, to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to change existing practice. Reasons for the grant or refusal of leave to enter are normally only given to the individual concerned or his nominated representative. We do however reserve the right to comment on the reasons for any decision where the person affected by it has sought to publicise the matter, or where it appears to be in the public interest to do so.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fair Employment Tribunal

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the total cost to 31 December 1992 of cases brought *(a)* against local authorities, *(b)* other public bodies and *(c)* private businesses, alleging religious and political discrimination, since the establishment of the Fair Employment Tribunal.

Mr. Atkins: Estimates cannot be provided as no information is available on the total costs to parties involved in such cases.

Labour Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed by *(a)* the Industrial Development Board and *(b)* the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

Mr. Atkins: At 31 March 1993 the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland employed directly 387 people, including 10 on a part-time basis, and the Local Enterprise Development Unit 232 people, including three on a part-time basis.

Infant Mortality Rates

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the perinatal and infant mortality rates for Northern Ireland within the last year up to the present date.

Mr. Hanley: Mortality rates are determined and recorded by calender year. For 1992, the perinatal mortality rate was 8·2 per 1,000 total births. This rate includes still-births of 24 to 27 completed weeks' gestation registered from 1 October 1992, when the gestation period was reduced to 24 weeks. For 1992, the infant mortality rate was 6·0 per 1,000 live births.

General Consumer Council

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed by the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Eight full-time and two part-time staff.

Road Gritting

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment on road gritting in the province during each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

Financial Year	*Amount (£ million)*
1988-89	[2]2·2
1989-90	[2]2·7
1990-91	[3]4·0
1991-92	[3]2·8
[1]1992-93	[3]3·3

[1]Provisional.
[2]Including VAT.
[3]Excluding VAT.

EC Secondments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 23 March, *Official Report*, column *559*, how many of those who have completed their secondment to the European Commission or UKREP are still employed by his Department.

Mr. Mates: All the officers who have completed their period of secondment to the EC Commission or UKREP are still employed by the Northern Ireland civil service.

One officer, having completed the maximum three years period allowed for detached national experts, was given special leave from the NICS to enable him to continue working for the Commission for a further period of five years. The officer is expected to return to the NICS on completion of his current contract with the Commission.

Another officer was also given special leave to enable him to undertake a period contract with the Northern Ireland centre in Europe, which is located in Brussels.

Deaths on Duty

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* soldiers, *(b)* policemen and *(c)* civil servants have been killed on duty in Northern Ireland during the last 10 years.

Mr. Mates: A total of 76 police officers and 71 soldiers have been killed on duty in Northern Ireland in terrorist-related incidents in the period from 1 January 1983 to 31 December 1992. Information on civil servants killed is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Investment

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many international firms are employed by the department of commerce, directly or indirectly through Government Departments, to promote investment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, acting through the Department of Economic Development, has responsibility for attracting inward investment to Northern Ireland. Across its global target markets, the IDB currently employs the services of:

(a) three international public relation firms to promote Northern Ireland as an inward investment location. These are, Kommunikation and Burson-Marsteller in Germany; Burson-Marsteller in Korea; and K-Concepts in Taiwan. In both the United States and Japan the selection of a PR agency is underway at present and appointments are expected to be made shortly; and

(b) two promotional support agencies who represent IDB in Asia Pacific and Brussels. These are Torne Investments Ltd. in Japan and Brussels and Jadehouse Investment Ltd. in Taiwan.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what efforts have been made to attract industrial development to Northern Ireland from the United States of America within the past four years; and what have been the results of such efforts.

Mr. Atkins: The search for new investment is spearheaded by IDB staff located in the USA. Until March

1990 the small team in New York was complemented by other Northern Ireland staff assigned to the British consulate general network throughout the USA.

With effect from April 1990 Northern Ireland established its own network of offices in New York, Los Angeles and a headquarters in Chicago reflecting the main centres of manufacture within the USA.

The core work of identifying and meeting potential investors is supported by a continuing promotional programme of cultivation of media, trade organisations and other key business contacts aimed at raising the profile of IDB activities within the USA.

In the past four years IDB representatives have visited 1,019 companies and encouraged 248 potential investors to visit Northern Ireland. Five major projects entailing an investment to £189 million and promoting 1,600 new jobs have been announced in the last four years.

In addition to the search for new investors close contact is maintained with the parent companies of the 34 United States-owned operations in Northern Ireland with a view to encouraging further investment. In the past four years 14 of these companies committed to investment programmes totalling £250 million which will provide 1,200 new jobs and safeguard a further 1,850 jobs.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements are made by his Department for publishing information about financial assistance to industry within Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: The Department of Economic Development has available a wide range of publications on financial assistance which is available to industry. These are obtainable from the DED businesses—the Industrial Development Board, the Local Enterprise Development Unit, the Training and Employment Agency, the Northern Ireland tourist board, the Industrial Research and Technology Unit and the Energy Efficiency Service.

The Department of Agriculture produces a wide range of information on the financial assistance available to the agricultural industry in Northern Ireland. This can be obtained from the Department's headquarters or from local county agricultural development offices. The Department also issues press releases on schemes of financial assistance when these are introduced or modified. In addition, the Department is currently updating its "At Your Service" booklet, a guide to the Department's services including financial assistance available and points of contact for further information.

Belfast Harbour

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the size of the Belfast harbour estate; and how many persons are employed therein.

Mr. Atkins: The Belfast harbour estate comprises 765 hectares of land and 440 hectares of water. Approximately 17,000 people are employed therein.

Prison Visits

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total sum of public money paid in social benefits to dependent relatives resident in Northern Ireland for the purpose of prison visits in Great Britain.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie, who wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 6 April.

Letter from Alec Wylie to Mr. Peter Robinson dated 6 April 1993:

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the amount of benefit paid to dependent relatives resident in Northern Ireland for the purpose of prison visits in Great Britain has been passed to me for reply.

During the twelve months ended 31 December 1992 there was a total sum of £30,730 paid under the Prison Visits scheme to people visiting relatives in prisons in Great Britain.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the official report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Housing

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present number of first and second preference applicants on the waiting list for each Northern Ireland Housing Executive estate in the borough of Castlereagh.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that at 1 March 1993 the information was as follows:

Number of first and second preference applicants

Estate	*1st preference applicants*	*2nd preference applicants*
Housing Executive District—Castlereagh 1		
Ballybeen	80	20
Braniel	92	54
Brooklands	3	9
Coronation Park	5	1
Geary Road	0	1
Mawhinney Park	0	3
Moatview Park	3	4
Tullycarnet	25	17
Vionville Rural Cottages	4	1
Any estate in District	17	9
Housing Executive District—Castlereagh 2		
Belvoir	177	107
Bests hill	2	2
Carryduff	41	31
Castlereagh	20	37
Cregagh	174	107
Downshire Park	3	7
Labourers Cottages Rural Area	4	0
Milltown Gray's Park	1	4
Milltown/Shaw's Bridge	2	15
Moneyrea	6	7
Newtownbreda Village	31	47
Rosewood Park, Castlereagh	4	5
Ryan Park, Castlereagh	1	5
Sunderland Road Flats	2	7
Any estate in District	22	7

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate has been made of the number of squatters in each of the Cregagh, Ballybeen, Belvoir, Tullycarnet, Downshire, Braniel, Carryduff and Twinbrook estates; and what percentage these squats represent of the total housing stock in each estate.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I am advised by its chief executive

that at 1 March 1993 there were no squatters in Cregagh, Ballybeen, Belvoir, Tullycarnet, Downshire, Braniel or Carryduff estates. There were 44 squatters in the Twinbrook estate which represents 3·2 per cent. of the total housing stock in that estate.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are employed in the special debt recovery unit of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and how many staff go out to tenants to collect rent arrears.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that the executive does not maintain a special debt recovery unit.

The executive employs 486 housing officers in its offices throughout the Province to deal with estate management issues, including arrears recovery.

Transport

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed by *(a)* Ulsterbus, *(b)* Citybus, *(c)* Flexibus and *(d)* Northern Ireland Railways.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the companies that the number of people employed by them at 31 March 1993 were:

	Number
Ulsterbus	2,107
Citybus	751
Flexibus	34
Northern Ireland Railways	805

Assistance to Industry

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Government or Government agency loans to industry have been written off and what was the total amount involved, in each of the last six years; and how many firms were involved.

Mr. Atkins: The numbers and amounts of loans to industry written off in each of the last six years were as follows:

Financial year	*Number of loans written off*	*Total amount £*	*Number of firms involved*
1987-88	30	928,534	30
1988-89	10	77,020	10
1989-90	10	[1]391,212,635	10
1990-91	38	2,101,612	38
1991-92	38	399,722	38
1992-93	57	[2]432,744,752	57

Notes:

[1] Includes £390 million written off in respect of Short Bros Plc.

[2] Includes £414,895,848 written off in respect of Harland and Wolff Plc and £17,370,632 in respect of Lear Fan Ltd.

The amounts given for each year are for principal only and do not include interest which in some cases was also written off.

Young Offenders

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the daily or weekly cost of maintaining a person in *(a)* a young offenders centre, *(b)* borstal or *(c)* prison.

Mr. Mates: The average weekly costs in 1991-92, the last year for which confirmed figures are available, and excluding headquarters and other central costs which cannot be readily attributed to individual prison establishments, were as follows:

	Per week
(i) Young Offenders Centre	£880
(ii) Prison	£1,279

The cost for the young offenders centre relates specifically to the male young offenders centre at Hydebank Wood; female young offenders are located in Maghaberry prison and separate figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

There is no borstal in Northern Ireland.

Roads

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on *(a)* road construction and *(b)* road maintenance in Northern Ireland each year since 1988; and how much is budgeted for 1993.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

Financial Year	*(a) Road Construction Expenditure £ million*	*(b) Road Maintenance Expenditure £ million*
1988-89	[3]19·5	[3]54·3
1989-90	[3]25·2	[3]63·1
1990-91	[3]24·9	[3]67·8
1991-92	[4]28·3	[4]62·2
[1]1992-93	[4]24·0	[4]65·1
[2]1993-94	[4]35·1	[4]63·4

[1] Provisional.

[2] Planned.

[3] Including VAT.

[4] Excluding VAT.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons in Northern Ireland receive more than £100 per week in respect of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie, who wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 6 April.

Letter from Alec Wylie to Mr. Peter Robinson, dated 6 April 1993:

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of persons receiving more than £100.00 per week in respect of Invalidity Benefit has been passed to me for reply.

At 1 April 1993 the number of people in Northern Ireland receiving more than £100.00 per week Invalidity Benefit was 8,559.

I hope you find this helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the official report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Sports Council

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future role of the Sports Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The Sports Council for Northern Ireland is a statutory body which operates under the provisions of the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986. Under the order, it has duties related to the promotion of sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland. In addition, it has executive and advisory functions, providing financial and other assistance to a wide range of bodies in connection with sport and physical education.

A new council has recently been appointed, but its role and responsibilities will remain the same, with the exception that, in due course, it will have the additional responsibility of distributing the funds from the national lottery allocated to sport in Northern Ireland.

District Councils

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed by each district council in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The number of employees of each district council as at September 1992 is as set out in the table:

	Permanent				*Temporary*				*Totals*		
	Non-Manual		*Manual*		*Non-Manual*		*Manual*		*Non-Manual*	*Manual*	*Total*
District Council	*F/T*	*P/T*	*F/T*	*P/T*	*F/T*	*P/T*	*F/T*	*P/T*			
Antrim	49	6	89	5	5	1	22	1	61	117	178
Ards	85	16	135	43	3	19	7	12	123	197	320
Armagh	106	6	74	11	9	5	19	2	126	106	232
Ballymena	164	3	118	33	15	7	28	2	189	181	370
Ballymoney	30	3	47	16	3	—	4	—	36	67	103
Banbridge	34	1	38	14	6	—	8	30	41	90	131
Belfast	814	81	1,127	200	62	17	197	39	974	1,563	2,537
Carrickfergus	53	6	79	16	—	—	2	3	59	100	159
Castlereagh	123	10	118	103	2	1	4	56	136	281	417
Coleraine	61	9	116	42	5	1	31	8	76	197	273
Cookstown	29	3	57	10	1	1	2	—	34	69	103
Craigavon	151	6	187	7	—	—	—	—	157	194	351
Derry	191	8	267	24	9	2	23	38	210	352	562
Down	124	4	121	21	7	10	16	108	145	266	411
Dungannon	35	—	80	23	5	1	31	—	41	134	175
Fermanagh	75	5	100	15	11	—	20	36	91	171	262
Larne	28	1	89	18	—	—	12	6	29	125	154
Limavady	31	1	59	11	3	—	23	7	35	100	135
Lisburn	118	13	134	20	2	1	22	—	134	176	310
Magherafelt	27	7	70	38	1	—	1	5	35	114	149
Moyle	20	1	45	4	2	—	5	8	23	62	85
Newry & Mourne	85	2	154	23	11	2	41	1	100	219	319
Newtownabbey	109	18	139	34	4	31	42	31	162	246	408
North Down	89	9	156	28	1	3	20	8	102	212	314
Omagh	140	—	60	25	38	13	141	50	191	276	467
Strabane	42	2	75	15	4	1	10	1	49	101	150
TOTAL	2,813	221	3,734	799	209	116	731	452	3,359	5,716	9,075

F/T = Full Time.
P/T = Part Time.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of *(a)* Enterprise Ulster, *(b)* the Fishery Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland and *(c)* the Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The annual cost of monitoring in each instance is negligible.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are employed by *(a)* the Fair Employment Commission, *(b)* the Northern Ireland tourist board and *(c)* the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Mr. Atkins: At 30 March 1993 the Fair Employment Commission had 66 employees; the Northern Ireland Tourist Board 121; and the Equal Opportunities Commission 32.

Civil Service

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons now in the civil service in Northern Ireland became civil servants as a result of the reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Mates: Approximately 1,280.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the expenditure on arms and ammunition by the Royal Ulster Constabulary over the past year.

Mr. Mates: Expenditure by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland on the purchase of arms and ammunition for the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the financial year ended 31 March 1993, amounted to £1,273,975.

Tourism

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been spent on the promotion of tourism in Northern Ireland in each of the past six years.

Mr. Atkins: Government expenditure on the promotion of tourism in Northern Ireland has increased significantly over the six years as is evidenced by the table:

Year	*£'000s*
1987-88	4,960
1988-89	5,387
1989-90	5,695
1990-91	7,357
1991-92	7,094
1992-93	11,662

Bankruptcies

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many firms have gone bankrupt in Northern Ireland each year since January 1991; how many firms went bankrupt in the previous two years; and how many firms have *(a)* gone into receivership and *(b)* been wound up in each quarter of the past two years.

Mr. Atkins: The numbers of bankruptcies and companies wound up in the calendar years 1989-1992 are as follows:

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Bankruptcies	238	286	366	404
Companies wound up	176	180	239	208

The quarterly statistics on receiverships and companies wound up for the past two years are shown as follows:

	1991 Quarter					*1992 Quarter*				
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*Total*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*Total*
Receivership	1	15	14	3	33	6	2	6	4	18
Wound-up	53	69	39	78	239	41	69	41	57	208

Terrorism

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been killed by terrorists in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the year; and what were the dates and locations of these murders.

Mr. Mates: The police are currently investigating 21 incidents in which terrorist organisations are believed to have killed 25 people in Northern Ireland in the period 1 January 1993 to 31 March 1993. Details of the date and location of these incidents are given in the table below.

	Date	*Location*	*Number of Deaths*
1.	3 January	Lisnagleer	2
2.	11 January	Dungannon	1
3.	14 January	Belfast	1
4.	17 January	Belfast	1
5.	21 January	Belfast	1
6.	23 January	Londonderry	1
7.	28 January	Cookstown	1
8.	2 February	Ballyronan	1
9.	9 February	Armagh	1
10.	11 February	Moy	1
11.	12 February	Castlederg	1
12.	15 February	Belfast	1
13.	24 February	Loughgall	1
14.	25 February	Crossmaglen	1
15.	8 March	Keady	1
16.	10 March	Belfast	1
17.	15 March	Newtownabbey	1
18.	17 March	Forkhill	1
19.	24 March	Belfast	1
20.	25 March	Castlerock	4
21.	25 March	Belfast	1
		Total	25

Old People's Homes

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the daily or weekly cost to his Department of maintaining a person in an old people's home.

Mr. Hanley: For the year ended 31 March 1992 the average cost of maintaining a resident in a home for the elderly administered by the Northern Ireland health and social services boards was £227 per week. This figure excludes capital and central administration costs.

Unemployment

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are registered as unemployed in Belfast East and West and of these how many are *(a)* males over 18 years, *(b)* males under 18 years, *(c)* females over 18 years and *(d)* females under 18 years; and what is the total number of people under 18 years unemployed in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The number of unemployed claimants disaggregated by age and sex for the parliamentary constituencies of Belfast East and Belfast West is set out in the table. The figures given relate to those unemployed on 11 February 1993, the latest date for which information is available.

Unemployed claimants	*Belfast East*	*Belfast West*
Males over 18 years	3,024	7,726
Males 18 years and under	62	156
Females over 18 years	949	1,397
Females 18 years and under	49	98
TOTAL	4,084	9,377

The total number of unemployed aged 18 years and under in Northern Ireland is 3,043.

Student Grants

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from Northern Ireland received grants towards their studies in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: The total number of students from Northern Ireland in receipt of awards in the 1991-92 academic year was 35,777.

Manufacturing Plants

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the number of *(a)* mainland British and *(b)* United States firms which have set up manufacturing plants in Northern Ireland since 1963; and, in each case, what information he has on the sum total of grants paid out and the number which are still in the Province, listing the names and the products produced by each.

Mr. Atkins: Information is available only from September 1982 when the Industrial Development Board was established. Sixteen mainland British and eight USA firms have set up manufacturing plants in Northern Ireland since that date with selective financial assistance from the Industrial Development Board. Grants totalling £5·3 million have been paid to the mainland British firms and £15·8 million to the USA firms. Nine mainland British and four USA firms still operate in Northern Ireland. Details of these are as follows:

Company name	*Product*
Mainland British	
Lynjoy Ltd.	Telecommunications components
Forte Airport Services	In flight meals
Rumenco Ltd.	Animal feed stuff additives
Bowater (NI) Ltd.	Printing
D. Evans Assemblies	Telecommunications components
ISA Poultry Services Ltd.	Poultry breeding
Tensator (NI) Ltd.	Backwound springs
Avery Label (NI) Ltd.	Self adhesive labels
Audio Processing Technology Ltd.	Music coding systems
USA	
Irlandus Circuits	Printed circuit boards
Sentronics	Digital tyre pressure gauges
DDL Electronics Ltd.	Circuit boards
Fruit of the Loom Manufacturing	Textile products

Inward Investing Firms

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the number of inward investing firms which have pulled out of Northern Ireland during each of the past four years and on the number of jobs affected.

Mr. Atkins: Information on inward investng firms which had accepted offers of selective financial assistance form the Industrial Development Board and subsequently closed is as follows:

Closures of Inward Investing Firms

	Number of closures	*Employment at date of closure*
1989-90	4	257
1990-91	9	352
1991-92	13	552
1992-93	12	1,065

Gaelic Athletic Association

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in persuading the Gaelic Athletic Association to end its ban on membership of those who have served in the Royal Navy, the Army or the police.

Mr. Hanley: As a voluntary sports organisation which receives grant aid, Government officials meet representatives of the GAA from time to time. The Government's regret for GAA membership restrictions is already in the public record but changes on GAA membership rules are a matter for that organisation.

Belfast International Airport

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much *(a)* public money and *(b)* money originating from European funding programmes has been invested in Belfast international airport over the last three years; what proportion of the total sum invested has been spent on improving the infrastructure of the airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Direct Government financial assistance to Belfast international airport ceased in 1989. Over the last three years over £7·5 million of grant aid from the European regional development fund transportation programme has been received, all of which has been spent on improving the airport infrastructure.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce the sale of Belfast international airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's decision to privatise the airport was announced by my predecessor in November 1991.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many airport police operate at Belfast international airport; under whose control they currently operate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: A total of 59 airport police are employed at Belfast international airport. They are all employees of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. and operate fully under their control.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list *(a)* the numbers of flights and *(b)* the numbers of passengers passing through Belfast international airport over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There were 96,510 aircraft movements at Belfast international airport in 1990; 97,213 in 1991; and 96,991 in 1992. Passenger movements in the same three years were 2,293,749; 2,168,226; and 2,245,618 respectively.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were employed at Belfast international airport on 1 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The figure is 363.

Port of Belfast

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding the privatisation of the port of Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As part of the consultation process on the draft Ports (NI) Order 1993 I have received 38 responses. These included 10 which expressed reservations about the possibility of privatising the port of Belfast. I will be considering each of these responses in detail.

Sex Offenders

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy on placing sex offenders selected for community service on schemes in the community.

Mr. Mates: Sentencing decisions in individual cases are matters for the courts. Where the courts impose a community service order for a sexual offence, or on an offender who has previously been convicted for sexual offences, the Probation Board for Northern Ireland places the offender on a scheme in which the risk to others and to the offender is minimised, and in which the offender can be closely supervised.

Ports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will amend the draft Ports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 in order to subject it to the affirmative resolution procedure.

Mr. Atkins: The draft Ports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 is already subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

School Budgets

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average cost per pupil of *(a)* centrally provided services, *(b)* such centrally provided services as form part of the potential schools budget and *(c)* central administration, in each local education authority in the last year for which information is available.

Mr. Hanley: There is no Northern Ireland equivalent to the potential schools budget used by local education authorities in England and Wales. The remaining information, obtained from the Northern Ireland education and library boards' 1991-92 local management of schools outturn statements, is as follows:

Cost per pupil

	Belfast	*North eastern*	*South eastern*	*Southern*	*Western*
	£	£	£	£	£
i. Centrally provided services	307	321	317	368	389
ii. Central administration	61	42	47	62	60

Trust Ports

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement concerning the procedure for privatising trust ports in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The Government propose to make an Order in Council to enable the privatisation of trust ports in Northern Ireland. As the proposed order has just concluded its consultation stage I have not yet considered the responses made and accordingly a statement on procedures would be premature.

Days Lost

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of days lost per 1,000 workers in Northern Ireland during each of the last two years.

Mr. Atkins: A total of 32 in 1991 and 15 in 1992.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average pupil-teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 18 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns *397-98*.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Mates: The appointments made by my right hon. and learned Friend which require a submission to the Prime Minister are as follows:

Chairman	— Industrial Development Board
Chairman	— Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights
Deputy Chairman and two members	— Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what research has been conducted in hospitals in the Province on myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Hanley: Over the last five years research has been carried out at the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, into the physical causes of myalgic encephalomyelitis and the possibility of devising an objective diagnostic test for the condition.

Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will give further consideration to student financial hardship associated with summer rent demands and the absence of housing benefit entitlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In general it is the student support system which is designed to provide financial help for full-time students. Housing benefit, which helps with both rent and rates, is available to vulnerable group students throughout their courses, including the summer vacation.

There are no plans to change this policy.

Industrial Development

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for each council area the number of visits sponsored by the Industrial Development Board by prospective investors, together with the sums invested in *(a)* manufacturing industry, *(b)* service industry and *(c)* banking, in each such area in each of the last three years for which figures are available, by (i) overseas investors, (ii) United Kingdom investors, (iii) Northern Ireland investors and (iv) investors from the Republic of Ireland or as much of such information as is available.

Mr. Atkins: Details of visits by prospective investors and planned investments in manufacturing industry and tradeable services are set out in the tables. There have been no investments by the banking sector.

Visits by prospective investors

District councils	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Antrim	61	81	38
Ards	3	9	5
Armagh	3	2	3
Ballymena	3	10	3
Ballymoney	1	1	4
Banbridge	1	—	—
Belfast	188	213	141
Carrickfergus	13	19	7
Castlereagh	9	14	8
Coleraine	4	28	4
Cookstown	—	—	1
Craigavon	14	12	15
Derry	23	28	23
Down	4	4	6
Dungannon	1	1	3
Fermanagh	1	1	4
Larne	11	10	5
Limavady	2	1	2
Lisburn	10	12	11
Magherafelt	1	—	1
Moyle	1	—	1
Newry and Mourne	4	4	10
Newtownabbey	40	46	30
North Down	10	25	7
Omagh	4	—	1
Strabane	3	1	—
TOTAL	415	522	333

Planned investment in manufacturing industry 1990-91

£ thousands

District councils	*Overseas*	*GB*	*NI*	*ROI*	*Totals*
Antrim	—	—	2,178	—	2,178
Ards	623	—	729	—	1,352
Armagh	—	—	2,846	—	2,846
Ballymena	60,449	—	1,221	—	61,670
Ballymoney	11,777	9,653	623	—	22,053
Banbridge	—	4,875	—	—	4,875
Belfast	22,220	809	3,809	733	27,571
Carrickfergus	—	—	1,214	—	1,214
Castlereagh	—	—	3,810	—	3,810
Coleraine	—	—	1,117	—	1,117
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	35,747	3,428	[illegible]1	853	68,739
Derry	4,035	356	11,[illegible]5	—	15,626
Down	—	459	—	—	459
Dungannon	—	63	18,864	—	18,927
Fermanagh	—	—	3,725	2,571	6,296
Larne	—	—	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	1,757	13,586	—	15,343
Magherafelt	1,240	—	4,117	—	5,357
Moyle	12,021	—	—	—	12,021
Newry and Mourne	—	6,129	1,093	—	7,222
Newtownabbey	—	—	1,516	—	1,516
North Down	—	4,073	2,282	—	6,355
Omagh	—	—	4,688	—	4,688
Strabane	—	13,445	—	478	13,923
TOTALS	148,112	45,047	107,364	4,635	305,158

Planned investment in tradeable services

£ thousands

District councils	*Overseas*	*GB*	*NI*	*ROI*	*Totals*
Antrim	—	—	—	1,152	1,152
Ards	—	—	—	—	—
Armagh	—	—	—	—	—
Ballymena	—	86	—	—	86
Ballymoney	—	—	—	—	—
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	—
Belfast	—	1.520	1,849	—	3,369
Carrickfergus	—	—	—	—	—
Castlereagh	—	—	—	—	—
Coleraine	—	—	—	—	—
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	—	—	219	—	219
Derry	—	—	—	—	—
Down	—	—	—	—	—
Dungannon	—	—	—	—	—
Fermanagh	—	—	—	—	—
Larne	—	—	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	—	—	—	—
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	—	—	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	3,733	—	—	—	3,733
Newtownabbey	—	949	—	—	949
North Down	—	—	—	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	3,733	2,555	2,068	1,152	9,508

Planned Investment in Manufacturing Industry 1991-92

£ thousands

District Councils	*Overseas*	*GB*	*NI*	*ROI*	*Totals*
Antrim	—	—	900	—	900
Ards	—	2,837	5,404	—	8,241
Armagh	—	—	4,574	—	4,574
Ballymena	—	1,810	1,315	—	3,125
Ballymoney	—	10,722	826	—	11,548
Banbridge	—	—	3,489	—	3,489

District Councils	Overseas	GB	NI	ROI	Totals
Belfast	5,386	—	4,666	4,450	14,502
Carrickfergus	—	—	210	—	210
Castlereagh	—	4,870	1,592	—	6,462
Coleraine	3,774	—	2,649	—	6,423
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	6,029	19,603	84,561	4,812	115,005
Derry	3,627	—	1,815	—	5,442
Down	—	—	1,390	—	1,390
Dungannon	—	—	5,379	—	5,379
Fermanagh	—	6,217	3,735	—	9,952
Larne	—	—	221	—	221
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	7,345	2,727	—	10,072
Magherafelt	657	—	—	—	657
Moyle	—	—	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	—	—	—	—
Newtownabbey	11,897	—	4,270	—	16,167
North Down	13,419	200	1,481	—	15,100
Omagh	—	—	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	44,789	53,604	131,204	9,262	238,859

Planned investment in tradeable services 1991-92

£ thousands

District councils	Overseas	GB	NI	ROI	Totals
Antrim	—	—	—	—	—
Ards	—	—	—	—	—
Armagh	—	—	—	—	—
Ballymena	—	—	—	—	—
Ballymoney	—	—	—	—	—
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	—
Belfast	—	1,253	—	317	1,570
Carrickfergus	—	—	—	—	—
Castlereagh	—	—	—	—	—
Coleraine	—	—	—	—	—
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	—	—	—	—	—
Derry	—	—	—	—	—
Down	—	—	—	—	—
Dungannon	—	—	—	—	—
Fermanagh	—	—	—	—	—
Larne	—	—	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	—	—	—	—
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	—	—	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	—	—	—	—
Newtownabbey	—	—	—	—	—
North Down	—	—	—	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	—	1,253	—	317	1,570

Planned investment in manufacturing industry 1992-93 (to end February 1993)
£ thousands

District councils	Overseas	GB	NI	ROI	Totals
Antrim	56,717	1,012	1,600	—	59,329
Ards	—	896	6,084	—	6,980
Armagh	—	—	1,610	—	1,610
Ballymena	4,954	1,741	1,789	—	8,484
Ballymoney	—	2,075	—	—	2,075
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	—
Belfast	—	275	4,859	—	5,134
Carrickfergus	—	—	—	—	—
Castlereagh	10,653	—	—	—	10,653
Coleraine	—	—	—	—	—
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	23,433	950	12,429	2,164	38,976
Derry	69,984	—	2,512	—	72,496
Down	—	—	—	—	—

District councils	Overseas	GB	NI	ROI	Totals
Dungannon	—	705	1,176	—	1,881
Fermanagh	—	3,081	3,228	—	6,309
Larne	—	1,359	—	—	1,359
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	7,974	2,026	—	10,000
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	—	—	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	1,336	1,458	3,012	5,806
Newtownabbey	—	—	—	—	—
North Down	—	—	—	—	—
Omagh	—	—	577	—	577
Strabane	—	10,797	—	—	10,797
TOTALS	165,741	32,201	39,348	5,176	242,466

Planned investment in tradeable services
1992-93 (to end February 1993)

£ thousands

District councils	Overseas	GB	NI	ROI	Totals
Antrim	—	2,107	—	—	2,107
Ards	—	—	—	—	—
Armagh	—	—	—	—	—
Ballymena	—	—	—	—	—
Ballymoney	—	—	—	—	—
Banbridge	—	—	—	—	—
Belfast	—	10,543	934	—	11,477
Carrickfergus	—	260	—	—	260
Castlereagh	—	—	—	—	—
Coleraine	—	—	—	—	—
Cookstown	—	—	—	—	—
Craigavon	—	—	—	—	—
Derry	—	—	—	—	—
Down	—	—	—	—	—
Dungannon	—	—	—	—	—
Fermanagh	—	2,349	—	—	2,349
Larne	—	—	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—	—	—
Lisburn	—	—	—	—	—
Magherafelt	—	—	—	—	—
Moyle	—	—	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	—	—	—	—
Newtownabbey	—	—	—	—	—
North Down	—	—	—	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS	—	15,259	934	—	16,193

Job Creation

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show what sums of public money have been *(a)* paid or *(b)* committed in each of the last five years per job (i) created and (ii) sustained in each parliamentary constituency in Belfast and in each of the other 25 local council areas; and from which Government agency the money was provided, or as much of such information as is readily available.

Mr. Atkins: The following tables show the assistance offered in recent years by the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit to promote and sustain employment.

Industrial Development Board

District council area	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
1988-89			
Antrim	712	160	6,773
Ards	164	—	1,105
Armagh	110	—	599
Ballymena	90	138	1,310
Ballymoney	16	147	450
Banbridge	99	—	775
Belfast	303	705	13,288
Carrickfergus	452	121	2,189
Castlereagh	95	175	2,859
Coleraine	115	—	1,182
Cookstown	16	42	332
Craigavon	169	176	4,511
Derry	432	48	7,877
Down	318	33	3,830
Dungannon	108	—	1,291
Fermanagh	296	71	4,033
Larne	148	25	3,763
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	1,039	19	33,321
Magherafelt	155	4	1,075
Moyle	—	—	—
Newry & Mourne	82	72	1,248
Newtownabbey	720	331	14,412
North Down	14	163	554
Omagh	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—

District council area	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
Total	5,653	2,430	106,777

District council area	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
1989-90			
Antrim	798	524	6,829
Ards	67	152	3,570
Armagh	34	—	268
Ballymena	206	83	2,554
Ballymoney	40	—	195
Banbridge	—	75	195
Belfast	601	293	11,069
Carrickfergus	100	—	3,974
Castlereagh	404	1,234	5,634
Coleraine	127	30	2,706
Cookstown	70	20	1,001
Craigavon	417	107	7,700
Derry	827	60	18,774
Down	24	—	393
Dungannon	136	—	1,567
Fermanagh	76	521	4,043
Larne	78	111	1,277
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	85	250	2,652
Magherafelt	53	100	1,442
Moyle	—	—	—
Newry and Mourne	32	109	353
Newtownabbey	743	195	14,245
North Down	147	275	1,751
Omagh	36	—	510
Strabane	30	45	548
Total	5,131	4,184	93,250

District council area	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
1990-91			
Antrim	139	16	1,333
Ards	50	31	269
Armagh	60	100	816
Ballymena	411	25	10,376
Ballymoney	49	248	3,549
Banbridge	—	480	1,459
Belfast	1,098	793	15,319
Carrickfergus	129	—	420
Castlereagh	68	—	873
Coleraine	—	32	273
Cookstown	—	—	—
Craigavon	474	876	16,964
Derry	371	2	4,929
Down	—	24	146
Dungannon	463	90	6,677
Fermanagh	156	—	2,250
Larne	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	288	2	3,746
Magherafelt	62	50	1,505
Moyle	—	101	991
Newry & Mourne	172	132	2,421
Newtownabbey	46	26	573
North Down	—	215	1,439
Omagh	93	111	1,349
Strabane	273	700	4,648
Total	4,402	4,054	82,325

Note:
The figures relating to new jobs include 1,036 jobs for which no Selective Financial Assistance was offered.

District council area	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
1991-92			
Antrim	77	—	246
Ards	149	50	1,650
Armagh	33	85	898
Ballymena	50	30	669
Ballymoney	57	315	1,771
Banbridge	29	87	1,428
Belfast	458	585	5,560
Carrickfergus	—	52	75
Castlereagh	84	61	1,205
Coleraine	50	164	1,648
Cookstown	—	—	—
Craigavon	716	831	33,022
Derry	103	—	1,285
Down	—	60	300
Dungannon	76	—	1,832
Fermanagh	101	73	3,333
Larne	25	—	51
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	155	—	2,249
Magherafelt	10	—	304
Moyle	—	—	—
Newry & Mourne	—	—	40
Newtownabbey	114	16	3,226
North Down	54	280	3,048
Omagh	—	—	—
Strabane	—	—	500
Total	2,341	2,689	64,340

Note: The figures relating to new jobs include 350 jobs for which no Selective Financial Assistance was offered.

District council area	New jobs	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
1992-93 (11 months to end of February 1993)			
Antrim	869	—	17,218
Ards	49	20	1,298
Armagh	20	5	366
Ballymena	136	20	2,598
Ballymoney	131	30	471
Banbridge	—	—	—
Belfast	294	184	6,044
Carrickfergus	5	—	36
Castlereagh	—	500	3,365
Coleraine	—	—	—
Cookstown	—	—	—
Craigavon	683	240	12,065
Derry	644	223	14,489
Down	—	—	—
Dungannon	25	—	436
Fermanagh	200	182	2,777
Larne	2	28	185
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	39	100	1,941
Magherafelt	—	—	350
Moyle	—	—	—
Newry & Mourne	75	115	1,500
Newtownabbey	—	—	—
North Down	—	—	80
Omagh	25	—	200
Strabane	150	—	3,400
Total	3,347	1,647	68,819

Note: The figures relating to new jobs include 100 jobs for which no Selective Financial Assistance was offered.

Local enterprise development unit

District councils	*Promoted jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*
1987-88				
Antrim	80	369	0	0
Ards	55	219	0	43
Armagh	142	633	0	0
Ballymena	143	494	24	93
Ballymoney	10	121	0	0
Banbridge	10	42	0	0
Belfast	918	3,907	116	360
Carrickfergus	246	999	0	0
Castlereagh	10	490	0	0
Coleraine	168	690	0	0
Cookstown	61	384	0	0
Craigavon	218	816	22	98
Derry	361	1,572	73	326
Down	112	673	0	0
Dungannon	261	1,099	112	440
Fermanagh	62	250	20	36
Larne	42	135	0	0
Limavady	48	96	0	0
Lisburn	142	440	49	112
Magherafelt	146	683	0	0
Moyle	43	60	0	0
Newry and Mourne	347	1,868	20	65
Newtownabbey	143	511	0	0
North Down	149	589	0	0
Omagh	47	359	0	12
Strabane	143	688	52	322
Totals	4,047	8,187	488	1,907

Local enterprise development unit

District councils	*Promoted jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*
1988-89				
Antrim	127	592	0	0
Ards	107	426	7	17
Armagh	107	487	0	23
Ballymena	100	388	20	38
Ballymoney	39	192	0	0
Banbridge	67	269	0	0
Belfast	1,108	4,424	113	471
Carrickfergus	207	880	0	0
Castlereagh	60	262	0	0
Coleraine	61	267	0	0
Cookstown	126	615	0	0
Craigavon	281	1,303	19	70
Derry	326	1,322	44	151
Down	120	623	0	0
Dungannon	311	1,890	31	53
Fermanagh	164	778	8	34
Larne	85	305	15	49
Limavady	80	456	0	0
Lisburn	115	475	25	56
Magherafelt	87	413	55	263
Moyle	10	52	0	0
Newry and Mourne	440	2,322	0	0
Newtownabbey	115	325	14	33
North Down	137	5,986	0	0
Omagh	136	676	0	0
Strabane	65	264	20	114
Totals	4,581	25,992	371	1,372

Local enterprise development unit

District councils	*Promoted jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*
1989-90				
Antrim	220	1,514	0	0
Ards	100	580	12	83
Armagh	297	419	3	15
Ballymena	160	364	0	0
Ballymoney	48	117	0	0
Banbridge	66	75	15	60
Belfast	1,510	5,877	66	333
Carrickfergus	103	823	10	39
Castlereagh	13	243	0	0
Coleraine	123	164	0	0
Cookstown	40	179	0	10
Craigavon	232	1,612	34	152
Derry	540	2,192	47	274
Down	190	307	10	48
Dungannon	252	1,746	40	101
Fermanagh	200	269	20	63
Larne	46	366	0	0
Limavady	28	299	0	0
Lisburn	256	582	9	34
Magherafelt	108	906	0	0
Moyle	16	233	0	0
Newry and Mourne	425	541	62	228
Newtownabbey	189	133	28	90
North Down	154	1,281	0	0
Omagh	163	752	55	239
Strabane	31	80	0	0
Totals	5,510	21,654	411	1,769

Local enterprise development unit

District councils	*Promoted jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*	*Safeguarded jobs*	*Assistance offered £'000*
1990-91				
Antrim	195	300	19	81
Ards	242	812	74	261
Armagh	170	686	64	182
Ballymena	178	574	64	153
Ballymoney	47	310	0	0
Banbridge	35	515	0	0
Belfast	1,514	5,347	242	728
Carrickfergus	154	1,333	0	0
Castlereagh	54	247	0	0
Coleraine	170	480	0	0
Cookstown	76	131	0	0
Craigavon	302	1,174	77	88
Derry	329	597	97	226
Down	172	935	49	264
Dungannon	278	2,124	0	0
Fermanagh	148	361	0	0
Larne	67	163	0	0
Limavady	86	345	0	0
Lisburn	216	943	0	0
Magherafelt	209	1,539	0	0
Moyle	6	52	0	0
Newry and Mourne	466	1,304	227	632
Newtownabbey	341	946	0	0
North Down	208	713	0	16
Omagh	254	684	0	0
Strabane	87	309	54	64
Totals	6,004	22,924	967	2,695

District councils	Local enterprise development unit: Promoted jobs	Assistance offered £'000	Safeguarded jobs	Assistance offered £'000
1991-92				
Antrim	81	237	0	0
Ards	174	739	0	0
Armagh	80	321	14	60
Ballymena	59	220	0	0
Ballymoney	4	14	0	0
Banbridge	34	316	0	0
Belfast	844	4,105	22	87
Carrickfergus	36	102	0	0
Castlereagh	40	53	0	0
Coleraine	33	112	0	0
Cookstown	94	376	0	0
Craigavon	162	851	95	301
Derry	181	713	0	0
Down	88	314	35	125
Dungannon	156	627	0	0
Fermanagh	133	554	0	0
Larne	26	80	0	0
Limavady	23	68	0	0
Lisburn	150	438	0	0
Magherafelt	66	217	0	0
Moyle	17	111	0	0
Newry and Mourne	268	1,047	25	80
Newtownabbey	174	624	8	48
North Down	137	418	0	0
Omagh	100	332	0	0
Strabane	62	414	0	0
Totals	3,222	13,403	199	701

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs will be created by the Seagate investment in Londonderry; what he expects the catchment area for employees to be; how many *(a)* Roman Catholic and *(b)* Protestant employees, will represent the balance in the work force consistent with fair employment practices; and what are the proportions of Roman Catholics and Protestants in the expected catchment area of employment.

Mr. Atkins: Over the next four years, employment at the Seagate investment in Londonderry is expected to reach 506. Responsibility for recruitment rests with the employer. Under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, all employers are required to afford fair participation in employment to members of both communities. The Fair Employment Commission will provide information and advice on any aspect of fair employment practices, including catchment areas, to any employer.

Potato Crop

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the acreage of the 1992 potato crop which was not harvested at *(a)* 1 December 1992, *(b)* 1 January 1993, *(c)* 1 February 1993, *(d)* 1 March 1993 and *(e)* 1 April 1993; and what percentage of the total acreage this represented at each date of (i) the seed and (ii) the ware crop acreage.

Mr. Hanley: Estimates of unharvested potatoes are as follows:

Week ended	Area not harvested (acres)	Unharvested seed as a percentage of total seed area	Unharvested ware as a percentage of total ware area
5 December 1992	6,250	17·4	24·3
2 January 1993	4,670	12·6	18·3
6 February 1993	3,909	9·9	15·7
6 March 1993	2,676	6·6	10·8
27 March 1993[1]	1,575	4·5	6·1

[1] Latest available date.

Correspondence

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reply he has sent to Mr. Jim McCormick of the East Belfast Conservative Association to a letter that was sent to him on 19 March.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I wrote to Mr. McCormick on 31 March confirming that the Government remained committed to the objective of finding an effective and permanent solution to the problem about which he had written to me.

University Funding

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what funding has been made available for *(a)* teaching, *(b)* research and *(c)* other activities in Queen's university, Belfast and the New University of Ulster in the years 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992, respectively;

(2) what is the total quantity of Government funding made available for Queen's university, Belfast and the New University of Ulster in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The amounts made available by Northern Ireland Departments to each university are as follows:

	Financial year					
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Queen's University						
Teaching	31,272	31,993	32,181	32,125	31,225	17,207
Research						14,837
Other activities	10,122	12,592	14,305	13,442	14,871	14,754
Total funding	41,394	44,585	46,486	45,567	46,096	46,798
University of Ulster						
Teaching	29,091	32,118	34,626	34,347	31,646	18,136
Research						13,775
Other activities	8,490	10,708	13,308	14,800	15,227	16,037
Total funding	37,581	42,826	47,934	49,147	46,873	47,948

Notes:

1. Departmental funding is not held on calendar year basis and tables give amounts in financial years.
2. Prior to the 1992-93 financial year, Departmental records do not identify funding for teaching and research separately.
3. Amounts exclude tuition fees paid under the Northern Ireland Students' Awards Regulations.
4. The reduction in teaching and research funding between 1990-91 and 1991-92 is accounted for by the shift in funding from these areas to cover increases in tuition fees.

"Growing a Green Economy"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many copies of his Department's publication "Growing a Green Economy" have been published; to which organisations and individuals it has been distributed; and what is the cost of the first print run.

Mr. Atkins: Ten thousand copies of "Growing a Green Economy" have been printed at a cost of £25,500. The document is being distributed widely within Northern Ireland to industry and commerce, business representative bodies, environmental interest groups and local councils. It is also available on demand at HMSO and a copy has been sent to each Member of Parliament for information.

Mink Farms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many mink farms are currently licensed in each county in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: There are no mink farms in Northern Ireland.

Scale Maps

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will arrange with the Ordnance Survey for the publication of a version or versions of the 1-50,000 scale maps of Northern Ireland showing *(a)* the townland boundaries, *(b)* local Government boundaries and *(c)* parliamentary boundaries.

Mr. Hanley: The decision whether to publish a particular type of map is a matter for the director and chief executive of Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland. I understand that some of the maps to which the hon. Gentleman refers are already available.

Fair Employment Tribunal

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases have been brought against private companies alleging religious and political discrimination, since the establishment of the Fair Employment tribunal until 31 December 1992, indicating the nature of each allegation and the tribunal's decision.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* It is not possible, until cases are heard, to distinguish between private companies, public limited companies, individuals and partnerships. However, in the period to 31 December 1992, 404 complaints were brought against private employers as distinct from public bodies. The nature of the allegations in such cases and the decisions of the tribunal, where available, are set out in the table.

	Number
Nature of allegation	
Alleged discriminatory dismissals	204
Alleged discriminatory non-appointments	133
Alleged discriminatory non-promotions	14
Alleged discriminatory harassments	24
Alleged discriminatory victimisations	29
	404
Decisions of tribunal	
Decisions—dismissed on merits	49
Decisions—dismissed following withdrawal	138
Decisions—applications allowed	7
Decisions—applications conciliated	14
Decisions—awaiting hearing	196
	404

SOCIAL SECURITY

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the average loss of benefit per claimant if maintenance could no longer be offset against income from 1 April.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims are currently made for housing and community charge benefit where maintenance payments are offset against income for benefit calculation.

Mr. Burt: In May 1991, there were an estimated 3,000 housing benefit cases and 4,000 community charge benefit cases.

Note: Figures apply to Great Britain and were derived from a small number of sample cases supplied by local authorities for the housing benefit and community charge benefit information system annual 1 per cent. sample of cases without income support.

Some cases received both housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Child Support Act

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of claims which will be made for housing and council tax benefit where maintenance payments will be offset against income in the first year of operation of the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: There is no such provision in housing benefit or council tax benefit.

Boarder Premium

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the cost of a boarder premium of £10 for each member of a homeless family living in *(a)* bed-and-breakfast accommodation and *(b)* hostel accommodation, including women's refuges; and if he will give a breakdown of the costs involved.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

Industrial Disablement

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of claimants seeking disability compensation for pneumoconiosis has been successful in each year since 1979; and what has been the annual disability benefit paid in each year.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the numbers of industrial injuries disablement pensions for pneumoconiosis in payment at the end of the statistical period since 1979 are in the table.

Period	*Pensions current at end of period*
1 October 1978 to 30 September 1979	28,610
1 October 1979 to 30 September 1980	27,580
1 October 1980 to 30 September 1981	26,040
1 October 1981 to 30 September 1982	24,800
1 October 1982 to 30 September 1983	23,770
1 October 1983 to 30 September 1984	22,810
1 October 1984 to 30 September 1985	22,140
1 October 1985 to 30 September 1986	20,740
1 October 1986 to 4 April 1987[1]	19,620
6 April 1987 to 2 April 1988	18,820
4 April 1988 to 1 April 1989	17,830
3 April 1989 to 31 March 1990	16,680
2 April 1990 to 31 March 1991	15,990
1 April 1991 to 4 April 1992	[2]14,610

Note: These figures are rated up from a 10 per cent. sample.
[1] Period covers six months only.
[2] Provisional figures only.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), of 29 March, *Official Report*, column 77, what consideration he gave to adopting a period of less than the 20 years aggregate of working underground to establish eligibility for industrial injury disablement.

Mr. Scott: In its report (Cm 2091) the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, which advises the Secretary of State on the prescription of occupational diseases for industrial injuries disablement benefit purposes, recommended extending the list of prescribed diseases to include chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners who meet specified criteria. The Government have accepted the council's recommendation in full.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brentford and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) of 29 March, *Official Report*, column 77, on industrial injuries disablement benefit for coal miners with bronchitis and emphysema, what decisions underlay the choice of 13 September 1993 as the date from which the regulations will take effect.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in his reply to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) mentioned the very large number of claims expected from miners and ex-miners when chronic bronchitis and emphysema are added to the list of prescribed industrial diseases; 13 September is the earliest date that the necessary medical and administrative arrangements can be put in place to deal with these claims.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to include ceramic workers in the list of workers who may claim compensation for chronic bronchitis and emphysema under the arrangements for payment of industrial injury disablement benefit.

Mr. Scott: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council advises the Secretary of State on the prescription of diseases for industrial injuries disablement benefit purposes. I understand that the council has not received any scientific evidence to suggest that bronchitis and emphysema should be recommended for prescription in relation to ceramic workers.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of underground coal miners with emphysema and chronic bronchitis who would have qualified for benefit from the recommendation in the report sent to him by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council in August 1992 but have died since he received the report.

Mr. Scott: No such estimate has been made.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of his decision on the recommendation of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Committee in regard to underground miners with emphysema and chronic bronchitis; and how the cost has been computed.

Mr. Scott: The current estimate of the net additional full-year benefit cost of implementing the council's recommendation to prescribe chronic bronchitis and emphysema in underground coal miners is in the region of £6 million. This estimate is based on the assumption that around 9,000 awards will be made. Some 4,000 of these will be to miners and ex-miners currently receiving industrial injuries disablement benefit for pneumoconiosis but who, following the prescription of chronic bronchitis and emphysema, will qualify for extra benefit. The remainder will be to those miners and ex-miners who newly qualify for benefit.

These estimates have drawn upon departmental records concerning pneumonoconiosis cases and upon the assistance of British Coal.

EC Social Affairs Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he intends to put to the European Social Affairs Council on 5 April.

Mr. Scott: None.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Miss Widdecombe: Two—the chairman of the Occupational Pensions Board, Sir Jeremy Rowe, and the chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee, Sir Peter Barclay.

Social Security Research Yearbook

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements he has made to distribute to interested non-governmental organisations copies of his Department's social security research yearbook 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: Copies of the yearbook have been sent to the main research organisations and others who have expressed an interest in the Department's research programme.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *376*, if he will publish an updated version of the table attached to the letter from the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), dated 26 September 1992, showing the percentages of men aged 65 and women aged 60 years who were in receipt of a full category A retirement pension in 1980 and 1991 as a percentage of *(a)* the relevant population in those years, and *(b)* category A pensioners; and if he will also publish the explanatory notes in the letter.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table.

Entitlement to full category A pension	*Column 1 as percentage of population*	*Column 2 as percentage of category A pensioners*
At 28 November 1980		
Men aged 65	79·47	96·86
Women aged 60	20·01	53·35
At 30 September 1992		
Men aged 65	68·1	91·8
Women aged 60	16·3	37·1

Notes:
1. Great Britain residents only.
2. Population estimates from mid-1991 based on population projection.
3. Equivalent figures for invalidity benefit are not currently available.

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the impact on the support ratio in 2030 of *(a)* maintaining the current state pension ages and *(b)* equalising state pension age at (i) 60, (ii) 65 and (iii) 67 years.

Miss Widdecombe: On the same basis as the estimates set out in the discussion document, "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", but incorporating the latest Office of Population Census and Surveys population projections, the effects on the support ratio in 2030 are in the table:

	Ratio
Current state pension ages	2·2
Age 60	1·8
Age 65	3·0
Age 67	3·2

Note:
The support ratio is defined as the number of people of working age per pensioner.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioner tax units had incomes less than £5,000 per annum in the age bands *(a)* 60 to 64 years, *(b)* 65 to 69 years, *(c)* 70 to 74 years, *(d)* 75 to 79 years, *(e)* 80 years and over and *(f)* all ages, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table:

Percentage of Pensioner Unit Age Groups with Gross Income of Less than £5000 per annum in 1989

Age	*60-64 Per cent.*	*65-69 Per cent.*	*70-74 Per cent.*	*75-79 Per cent.*	*80+ Per cent.*	*All Per cent.*
Single pensioners	68	67	71	82	87	77
Pensioner couples	[1]—	13	18	23	27	18
All pensioner units	68	38	48	62	76	55

Notes:
1. A pensioner unit is defined as a single person aged at or above state pensionable age (SPA) or a couple where the husband is aged at or above SPA.
2. The age of the pensioner couple is taken to be the age of the husband.
[1]— Under the above definitions there are no pensioner couples in the 60-64 age band.

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the additional cost or saving to the Exchequer of equalising the state pension age at *(a)* 60, *(b)* 65 or *(c)* 67 years compared with the current arrangements.

Miss Widdecombe: On the same basis as the estimates set out in the discussion document "Options for Equality in State Pension Age," the effects on the Exchequer are in the table:

1992-93 prices £ billion
Cost +ve, savings −ve

	2025	*2035*
Age 60	4·6	3·6
Age 65	−3·7	−3·1
Age 67	−6·4	−5·7

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the state pension age in *(a)* Sweden and *(b)* the United States of America.

Miss Widdecombe: State pension age in Sweden is currently 65 for both men and women. In 1992 the Government passed legislation to raise the state pension age to 66. The new pension age will be phased in gradually over a four-year period ending in 1998.

State pension age in the United States of America is currently 65 for both men and women. In 1983 the Government passed a law to raise the age at which full benefits are payable from 65 to 67. The new age will be phased in very gradually during the first quarter of the next century.

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the impact on the economically active ratio in 2030 of *(a)* maintaining the current state pension ages and *(b)* equalising the state pension age at (i) 60, (ii) 65 and (iii) 67 years.

Miss Widdecombe: On the same basis as the estimates set out in the discussion document, "Options for Equality in State Pension Age," the effects on the economically active ratio in 2030 are in the table.

	Ratio
Current state pension ages	1·4
Age 60	1·4
Age 65	1·5
Age 67	1·6

Note: The economically active ratio is defined as the number of active adults per inactive adult.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of recipients of *(a)* full state retirement pension and *(b)* reduced state retirement pension for each year since 1979-80.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of retirement pension recipients resident in Great Britain receiving 100 per cent. of the basic pension (full) or less than 100 per cent. (reduced rate) is as follows:

Thousands

	Category A [1]		*Category B* [2]	
	Full	*Reduced rate*	*Full*	*Reduced rate*
November 1979	4,301·5	344·3	3,761·0	116·7
November 1980	4,359·2	401·6	3,802·8	111·8
November 1981	4,414·9	452·5	3,844·6	106·3
September 1982	4,427·3	516·3	3,849·9	106·3
September 1983	4,444·6	588·6	3,840·9	103·7
March 1984	4,411·9	627·3	3,788·1	100·1
September 1985	4,539·3	674·9	3,848·9	99·4
September 1986	4,605·3	700·7	3,857·9	94·7
September 1987	4,650·1	712·5	3,838·3	93·5
September 1988	4,678·2	717·2	3,818·3	92·9
March 1989	4,677·6	720·2	3,796·8	92·1
September 1990	4,748·3	756·3	3,774·5	92·0
September 1991	4,773·2	780·7	3,749·7	93·2
September 1992	4,803·9	816·4	3,720·3	99·7

[1] Men and women on own insurance.
[2] Wives and widows on husband's insurance.

Note:
Further details can be found in the six-monthly "Retirement Pension: All Cases Tables" available in the Library.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total weekly cost of the state retirement pension for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is in the table.

Year	*Basic RP (estimated)*	*SERPS (estimated)*	*Total weekly cost (estimated)*
1992-93	£488 million	£26 million	£514 million
1993-94	£504 million	£30 million	£534 million

Notes:
1. Source—Departmental Report 1993.
2. Excludes the cost of the non-contributory over-80 pension.
3. Weekly cost is based on the number of pension paydays in the year 1 April-31 March.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the operative date for the uprating of the state retirement pension in each year from 1980 to 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The operative dates for uprating —that is, since 1987, the first Monday in the tax year—are as follows:

Year	*Uprating date*
1980	24 November 1980
1981	23 November 1981
1982	22 Novemberr 1982
1983	21 November 1983
1984	26 November 1984
1985	25 November 1985
1986	28 July 1986
1987	6 April 1987
1988	11 April 1988
1989	10 April 1989
1990	9 April 1990
1991	8 April 1991
1992	6 April 1992
1993	12 April 1993

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what evaluation has been made by his Department of the physical and organic nature of myalgic encephalomyelitis, and of differences from other chronic fatigue syndromes, in his setting of guidelines for benefit support;

(2) what disability benefits are available for sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis who are required to take off extensive periods from work as part of a recovery programme.

Mr. Scott: The Department accepts that there may be a physical and organic basis for the condition known as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME). It may well be that only a small proportion of people with chronic fatigue syndromes meet criteria which have been used to describe ME as a distinct entity. Although there may be aetiological differences between ME and other chronic fatigue syndromes, their disabling effects and the needs arising from them are often similar.

Eligibility for receipt of disability or incapacity benefits does not depend upon the person being affected by a particular disease or diagnosis, but on the disabling effects of the clinical condition and the care and mobility needs which arise from them; or the effect of the disablement or illness on the capacity for work.

A wide range of benefits is available to sick and disabled people, including sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis, provided they meet the conditions of entitlement.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Miss Widdecombe: None.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what analysis his Department has made of the fuel bills of disabled people and carers, and the effects of a value added tax charge on those bills, in his consideration of the uprating of *(a)* income-related benefits and *(b)* other benefits for disabled people and carers.

Mr. Burt: Our conclusions in regard to the impact of VAT on people on low incomes, including those who are disabled or carers, will be made public in the normal way in the autumn statement on benefit uprating. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it clear that extra help will be given to poorer pensioners and others on low incomes.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department will take to ensure that disabled people and carers on income-related benefits who have higher than average fuel bills are fully compensated for the introduction of a value added tax charge on domestic fuel.

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are being taken to assist single mothers to afford the new tax provision on heating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: In his budget statement the Chancellor said that there would be extra help for poorer pensioners and those on low incomes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be announcing the details of this extra help in the autumn.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what benefits are available to schizophrenics; what plans he has to extend these; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: A wide range of benefits is available to sick and disabled people, including people with schizophrenia, provided they meet the conditions of entitlement. Many such people will have already benefited from the introduction of disability living allowance in April 1992. We have no plans to further extend benefit provision for schizophrenics.

Social Fund

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been made in the past year for judicial review on social fund decisions; and what percentage were successful.

Mr. Scott: In 1992-93, five judicial review applications were made. So far, two of these have been heard; neither was successful.

There have been 12·5 million applications for discretionary social fund payments since they became available in 1988; of these, only 25 have resulted in judicial review applications. Of the 20 applications that have been heard, only three have been successful.

Domestic Fuel Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures for estimated domestic fuel expenditure by households on income support giving figures separately for expenditure on *(a)* oil, *(b)* piped gas, *(c)* bottled gas, *(d)* electricity and *(e)* coal.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 26 March 1993]:* Estimates of average reported fuel expenditure by households headed by an income support (IS) recipient are given in the table. The estimates will include cases where the household fuel expenditure is partly incurred on behalf of other family units not in receipt of IS within the same household. IS recipients who are not heads of households are not included. The estimates are based on the combined 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys and so reflect average levels of expenditure for that two-year period.

Average weekly expenditure on fuel by households headed by a recipient of IS, from the 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys

	£
All domestic fuel	11·00
Of which:	
(b) piped gas	3·70
(d) electricity	6·00
(e) coal, coke	0·80

The number of IS households reporting expenditure on oil is too small for a reliable estimate to be given. A separate estimate of expenditure on bottled gas is not available from the Family Expenditure Survey data. Both these items, together with other minor fuels, are included in the estimate of total fuel expenditure.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average level of housing benefit per recipient, in English and Welsh local authorities payable to *(a)* local authority tenants, *(b)* local housing association tenants and *(c)* private sector tenants for 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1992-93.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is in the table.

	England		*Wales*	
Year	*Local authority tenants* £	*Private tenants*[1] £	*Local authority tenants* £	*Private tenants*[1] £
[2]1990	20·18	25·86	20·37	22·24
[2]1991	23·35	32·96	22·57	29·44
[3]1992	27·72	39·02	27·03	34·31

[1] Separate information on the average amount of housing benefit received by housing association tenants is not collected separately. It is therefore included with that of private tenants.
[2] The data source is the housing benefit and community charge benefit annual 1 per cent. sample for May.
[3] The data source is the quarterly caseload count for May 1992.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the administrative cost of housing benefit for each English local authority for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Miss Widdecombe: A copy of a table showing local authorities' estimates of their housing benefit administration costs for 1991-92 and 1992-93 will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the method of payment of housing benefit to local authorities and their administrative costs.

Miss Widdecombe: Both the Department of the Environment and this Department receive representations about housing benefit payments and Government subsidy on these payments, which are most frequently made by tenants, local authorities and local authority associations.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 April 1993

HEALTH

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research is currently funded by her Department into myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what research has been completed by her Department into myalgic encephalomyelitis since 1979;

(2) what attempts she has made to ensure that all GPs are aware of the research and diagnostic criteria developed to ensure the proper health care for sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis;

(3) what representations she has received from the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association in regard to counselling and support offered by the national health service to myalgic encephalomyelitis sufferers;

(4) what information she has on the occurrence of myalgic encephalomyelitis in teenagers.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the occurrence of myalgic encephalomyelitis in teenagers is not available centrally.

The Department has received correspondence on various aspects of ME from the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association, its members and supporters. Ministers and officials have had meetings with representatives of the association and other ME voluntary bodies.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is currently funding a study at the Institute of Psychiatry. The MRC is always willing to receive and consider soundly based research proposals in competition with other applications. The Department also keeps in touch with research being funded by bodies such as the Linbury Trust.

Medical practitioners keep in touch with developments in diagnosis, health care and treatment through professional journals, post graduate education, attending scientific seminars and the activities and publications of the medical royal colleges. The Department is supporting a task force, including representatives from the ME voluntary bodies, the Royal College of General Practitioners and experts involved in research and patient management. The task force will be considering matters such as the publication of guidance on ME which will be of help to medical practitioners.

General Practitioner Fund Holders

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the oral statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), on 24 March, *Official Report*, column 1208, if she will indicate the evidence underlying the statement that in April 1991 the baseline cost of general practitioner fund holders' prescribing of medicines was 10 per cent. less than that of non-fund holders' prescribing.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Prescription Pricing Authority data show that in April 1991 the cost of non-fund holders' prescribing was £3·88 per person and that of fund holders was £3·49 per person.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what international co-operative projects exist in the field of schizophrenia research;

(2) what research is being undertaken by or being financed by her Department into the causes of and possible cures for schizophrenia; what projects exist for rehabilitation and training of people suffering from schizophrenia; what crisis centres with 24-hour support her Department finances; what planned allowances of beds in hospitals is made for those with recurring mental illness; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Department is not involved in international projects or financing research. The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Health authorities, working with local authorities and the independent sector, should provide a comprehensive range of local services for mentally ill people, including in-patient beds and crisis intervention accommodation. The provision of rehabilitation and training for the long-term mentally ill is also part of the comprehensive district service. The level of provision is a matter for local management to determine, taking into account local priorities and available resources.

Telecommunications Equipment

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies the National Radiological Protection Board is undertaking of the effects of telecommunications equipment.

Mr. Sackville: The National Radiological Protection Board advises Government on risks to human health from non-ionising electromagnetic radiation, including emissions from telecommunications equipment. The board's advice is that the radio frequency energy emitted by telecommunications equipment does not constitute a cancer hazard on the basis of available research evidence. The research work of the NRPB's non-ionising department encompasses biological research, programmes of physical measurements and theoretical dosimetry and health hazard assessment. The Department of Trade and Industry, together with the Science and Engineering Research Council and a number of industrial participants, are funding a research study of the physical interaction of electromagnetic fields and the human head. The results from this and other studies will enable a better assessment of the extent to which emissions comply with recommended restrictions on human exposures.

Doctors' Hours

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors by hospital district health authority and region were working more than an average of 83 hours per week at 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: We expect to receive reports from regional task forces shortly showing the number of junior hospital doctors and dentists in England who were contracted for more than a maximum average of 83 hours per week at 1 April.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest annual number of recorded cot deaths; what the figure was in 1988; and what further research is planned into cot deaths.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The latest annual numbers of recorded cot deaths for 1988 and for 1991 are shown in the table.

Research into cot deaths is commissioned through the national health service research and development programme. The Department, together with the Anne Diamond Cot Death Appeal, is currently funding research into cot deaths in Avon. Funding for another proposal is under consideration. Work in this area commissioned by the Department of Health complements research by other agencies, including the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths and the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Since 1979 the MRC has spent just over £4·2 million on research into sudden infant death, respiratory distress syndrome and related projects.

The confidential inquiry into stillbirths and deaths in infancy, which is a long-term strategic initiative, also includes in-depth inquiries into cot death, in selected regions, in its current programme.

Cot deaths[1] in England and Wales, 1988 and 1991

	1988	*1991*
Under one year of age	1,467	935
One year and over	32	39

[1] In this table cot deaths refer to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, ICD 9th revision 798·0) where the death certificate identified SIDS as either being (i) a main cause of death (deaths under 28 days of age) or (ii) the underlying cause of death (28 days and over).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Religious Affiliations

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The annual cost is negligible.

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the Northern Ireland social fund discretionary budget will be for 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: I am glad to be able to announce that the social fund discretionary budget for 1993-94 will be £28·5 million. This is an increase of £3·5 million over the original amount allocated to districts for 1992-93. Details of the allocations are being placed in the Library of both Houses together with a note explaining their basis.

Child Support Agency

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in establishing the child support agency for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: I am pleased to announce that the Child Support Agency for Northern Ireland was established as an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Services on 5 April 1993. The Child Support (NI) Order 1991 gives effect in Northern Ireland to a new system for the provision of child support. Under this system, the agency will have responsibility for the assessment, collection and enforcement of child support maintenance payment in Northern Ireland.

I am certain that the new arrangements will be a significant improvement on the present system, which is fragmented, discretionary and, consequently, inconsistent in setting levels of maintenance. The agency has a crucial part to play in the efficient implementation and effective functioning of these new arrangements. I have delegated full managerial authority for the agency's day-to-day operations to its chief executive. The policy and resources framework of the agency is set out in the framework document, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

In addition, I have set challenging targets for the agency in its first year of operation. These are to achieve the following:

- 60 per cent. of people with the care of children making eligible applications to the CSA to have maintenance arranged;
- annual benefit savings of £12·8 million;
- to manage the agency's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £5·1 million;
- 65 per cent. of clients to regard the service as satisfactory;
- to meet a set of milestone targets set by the Minister, which relate to major initiatives.

ENVIRONMENT

Broadmoor Hospital (Noise and Nuisance)

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what legislative protection there is for residents of Broadmoor hospital who are disturbed by intrusive noise and nuisance; and what plans he has to enforce the protection contained in section 68 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in respect of Broadmoor hospital.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities may take action requiring the abatement of noise emitted from premises, including land, under part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Any complaints about noise at Broadmoor hospital should therefore be addressed to the local authority in the first instance. Section 68 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 enables my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to make regulations to control noise from plant or

machinery. My right hon. and learned Friend has not made any regulations under the provisions of section 68 of the Control of Pollution Act.

Reservoirs (Grazing)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that water companies follow the recommendations of his Department's letter of advice dated 5 October 1990, concerning action to be taken to prevent the grazing of grass-covered surface reservoirs by livestock.

Mr. Maclean: The drinking water inspectorate has made detailed checks on the progress that water companies have made in preventing livestock from grazing on grass-covered service reservoirs. Most service reservoirs with previously unrestricted access to livestock have now been fenced. A few companies have encountered difficulties in obtaining permission to fence reservoirs located in national parks and other areas where restrictions apply. In these cases the inspectorate is encouraging companies to investigate less obtrusive fencing and other means that might be acceptable to the relevant authorities.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much housing investment programme grant each London borough applied for; and how much they were awarded for the financial year 1993-94 and for each year since 1980-81.

Mr. Baldry: Information on housing investment programme bids, HIP allocations and housing capital expenditure since 1980-81 for each of the London borough councils and the City of London has been prepared and the tables deposited in the House of Commons Library.

Urban Air Quality

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reduce the level of pollutants in London's air listed in his Department's report "Urban Air Quality in the United Kingdom."

Mr. Maclean: The Government have taken action to reduce urban air pollution on a number of fronts. The implementation of European Community directives on vehicle emissions will substantially reduce the level of pollution from road transport. The national plan for implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe protocol on volatile organic compounds is designed to ensure that the levels of pollution from solvents in paints, ink and glues and from evaporation of liquid fuels will fall. Other measures which will act to reduce urban air pollution include the implementation of European legislation on emissions from large boilers and on fuel composition.

Road Building

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his Department to publish research it has undertaken on the effect of road building on the inner-city economy.

Mr. Redwood: My Department commissioned a literature review on the impact of transport investment upon the inner city from Dr. Margaret Grieco of the transport studies unit, Oxford university. The review offered mixed views on the effects of roadbuilding in inner cities. The contractor has been invited to publish the work under licence from HMSO.

First-time House Buyers

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of first-time buyers who have entered the housing market as a result of the measures announced in the autumn statement.

Sir George Young: The housing market package, announced in the autumn statement, included £50 million for additional grants under the cash incentive scheme and tenants incentive scheme. These have enabled 3,300 tenants of local authorities and housing associations to buy homes of their own on the private market, freeing their previous homes for families in housing need.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the incinerators of which he is aware in Germany that are suitable to dispose of the toxic waste which he has requested his German counterpart not to allow to be exported to the United Kingdom for incineration by ReChem.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available. I am aware that Germany does have high temperature incinerators which are capable of disposing of this toxic waste.

Housing Associations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes have been provided each year under the housing associations managing agents scheme; and how much central Government grant has been involved.

Sir George Young: The housing associations as managing agents scheme was set up to encourage private owners to rent out their property. HAMA has been running with five pilot housing associations operating in Oxford and the south-east since 1992.

During the first year of the scheme, up to 31 March 1993, 308 homes were brought into management. An additional 515 homes have been provided by one of the pilot housing associations which found leasing arrangements, as opposed to management agreements, more attractive to private landlords operating in their area. During 1992-93 a total of £300,000 was made available to run the HAMA pilot scheme.

On 6 January, I was pleased to announce that HAMA will be extended to provide national coverage with another 22 housing associations managing schemes. These housing associations will be working with 140 local authorities throughout England. A further £1·25 million has been allocated to these associations which will allow for two staff plus running costs during 1993-94.

I now hope to see 5,000 private sector homes brought into management and used to house families in need within the next year or so; this will take us a long way towards the target of 10,000 homes under HAMA by 1996.

There are housing associations not in receipt of grant aid under HAMA which have set up their own projects based on the principles of HAMA. We do not, however, hold information on these projects.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidance clarifying the extent to which housing associations assisted with public funds apply the provisions of the public procurement directive.

Mr. Baldry: The relevant provisions apply to contracting authorities carrying out civil engineering works or building works for hospitals, facilities intended for sports, recreation and ledisure, school and university buildings or buildings for administrative purposes. I would therefore not expect housing activities which housing associations carry out with public subsidy to be affected.

Empty Properties

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times the task force on Government Departments' empty houses has met; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The task force on Government Departments' empty houses has met twice since it was established on 8 December 1992. It has made good progress on the work necessary to deliver its remit of helping to bring empty Government residential properties back into housing use. The third meeting of the task force is due to take place on 28 April.

Charity Homes (Tax Exemption)

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of ending the local tax exemption of residential homes run by charities.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government and Inner Cities to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 31 March, *Official Report*, columns *290-91*.

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many consents have been given to housing authorities under section 27 of the Housing Act 1985.

Sir George Young: Since the provisions of section 27 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by section 10 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, came into force, the Secretary of State has given 116 consents to management agreements entered into under these powers.

Water Meters

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is held by OFWAT as to the percentage of domestic houses that have a water meter installed, region by region, at the most recent date for which information is available and the same date 12 months perviously.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available by region. Information for each water company for 1991-92 is shown in the table. For similar information for 1992-93, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 2 April, *Official Report*, column *521*.

Water Company	*Metered Supply Households (000s)*	*Proportion Percentage*
Anglian Water Services Ltd	30	2·1
Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water Company	4	2·5
Bristol Water plc	10	2·5
Cambridge Water Company	3	3·0
Chester Waterworks Company	1	2·3
Cholderton and District Water Company Ltd	<1	1·5
Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig	29	2·8
East Surrey Water plc	2	1·6
East Worcester Water plc[1]	13	14·7
Essex Water plc	6	1·1
Folkestone and Dover Water Services Ltd	1	1·6
Hartlepools Water Company	<1	0·1
Mid Kent Water plc	3	1·5
Mid Southern Water plc	8	3·2
North East Water plc	3	0·6
North Surrey Water Ltd	7	4·0
North West Water Ltd	29	1·1
Northumbrian Water Ltd	1	0·2
Portsmouth Water plc	<1	0·1
Severn Trent Water Ltd	94	3·6
South East Water Ltd	7	3·0
South Staffordshire Water plc	9	1·9
South West Water Services Ltd	19	3·4
Southern Water Services Ltd	84	9·9
Suffolk Water plc	3	3·1
Sutton District Water plc	<1	0·3
Tendring Hundred Water Services Ltd	2	3·5
Thames Water Utilities Ltd	72	2·5
Three Valleys Water Services plc	16	1·8
Wessex Water Services Ltd	16	3·9
Wrexham and East Denbighshire Water Company	2	3·6
York Waterworks plc	<1	0·1
Yorkshire Water Services Ltd	29	1·7
England and Wales	503	2·6

[1] For 1992-93, figures for East Worcester Water plc have been included with those for Severn Trent Water Ltd.
Note: Proportions may not tally exactly due to rounding.

Advisory Council for Business and the Environment

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the future of the Advisory Council for Business and the Environment.

Mr. Maclean: The Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment was established in May 1991 for a two-year term. The Government are currently considering the future of the committee.

Water Supply

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require water companies to make open to the public any investigative report of a major fault in the water supply which has put water supplies to the public at risk.

Mr. Maclean: The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 require water undertakers to notify the

relevant local authority and district health authority of any event which by reason of its effect or likely effect on the water supplied by it gives rise to, or is likely to give rise to, a significant risk to health, and to supply such information relating to the event and its consequences as the authorities may reasonably require.

Directions given under section 202 of the Water Industry Act 1991 require water undertakers to report such events to the Secretary of State. The conclusions of consequent investigations by the drinking water inspectorate are made available to the relevant local authorities and district health, and to any other concerned parties who have expressed an interest.

I have no plans for further legislation.

Homelessness

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the current number of homeless families in each London borough; and what is the current number of homeless people in bed and breakfast accommodation in each London borough;

(2) what is the current total number of homeless people in London; and if he will list the figures by borough.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the number of households for which local authorities in England accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 is reported in part E of the quarterly P1 return.

Details of the numbers of homeless households are published quarterly in a DOE Information Bulletin—"Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act 1985: England". Tables 1(a) and 4(a) of the latest bulletin, which gives statistics for the fourth quarter 1992, contain figures on total homeless households and households temporarily accommodated in bed-and-breakfast hotels in London. Details of figures reported by individual local authorities in London can be found in the suplementary table to the bulletin. Copies of both are in the Library.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's current estimate of the number of people sleeping rough within the Greater London area.

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not make estimates of the numbers of persons sleeping rough. The 1991 census recorded the numbers of persons found sleeping rough at pre-identified sites in Greater London on census night, 21-22 April 1991; the total number recorded was 1,197.

A count conducted in November 1992 by voluntary organisations that work with homeless people found 419 homeless people sleeping rough in central London; this compares with a figure of over 1,000 prior to the introduction of the Department's rough sleepers initiative in 1990.

Housing Starts

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of new local authority and housing association housing starts for the last three years for which figures are available; and what is his Department's estimate of the number of new housing starts for each of the next 10 years in each London borough.

Mr. Baldry: Estimates are shown in the table for the total number of housing association and local authority housebuilding starts in England during the last three years. Housing associations are now the main providers of additional social sector housing.

	Number of dwellings	
Year	*Housing associations*	*Local authorities*
1990	14,400	6,500
1991	15,700	3,000
1992	27,400	1,400

Estimates of housebuilding starts for each London borough are published in "Local Housing Statistics". Issue No. 103 contains annual figures up to 1991; issue No. 104 contains estimates for the first nine months of 1992. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

The Department does not prepare forecasts of housebuilding activity.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice and guidelines on environmental protection, land and wildlife conservation his Department has given to London-wide bodies; and how often he updates the advice.

Mr. Baldry: Advice and guidance is issued, and revised as required, nationally and sent to London-wide bodies where appropriate to their statutory functions.

Forestry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the first report of Session 1992-93 from the House of Commons Environment Committee on forestry and the environment.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* The Government expect to respond within two months.

Council Tax

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which are assuming less than a 98 per cent. success rate in levying council tax for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* There are 228 authorities which have assumed a collection rate of less than 98 per cent. I have arranged for the available information to be placed in the Library of the House.

Private Rented Homes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average weekly rent for rented accommodation in London, the south-east, the midlands and the private sector which has been let in the last 12 months.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* On the basis of data from the 1991 family expenditure survey it is estimated that the average weekly rent in 1991 for all households in rented accommodation that they had moved into in the previous 12 months was £47. The average for

those households renting in the private sector, excluding housing association properties, was £65. The sample on which these figures are based is relatively small and the estimates are, therefore, subject to quite large sampling error. The sample size of the FES is too small to provide satisfactory estimates for individual regions.

Construction Industry (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he has to improve the unemployment situation in the construction industry on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* My Department has a substantial programme of capital spending on Merseyside which will create new opportunities for employment in the construction sector. In housing almost £100 million will be provided in 1993-94 through the estate action and housing investment programmes, while the Housing Corporation will support about £95 million of housing association expenditure. The Liverpool housing action trust will be spending over £100 million over the next seven to 10 years on improvements to tower blocks. The three Merseyside city challenges currently anticipate the creation of over 200,000 person weeks of construction employment, and further opportunities will be created by the ongoing programme of Merseyside development corporation.

In addition, the Liverpool city action team is working with a wide range of agencies and organisations to improve access to construction employment opportunities for local residents.

Archaeologists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by local authority the number of archaeologists currently in post; and what the corresponding figure was 10 years ago.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not held centrally. However, English Heritage estimates that approximately 300 archaeologists are employed by county councils and about 30 by district councils. It is estimated that in 1980 approximately 50 archaeologists were employed by local authorities.

Global Technology Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the benefits to British business of the global technology partnership conference in Birmingham, 23 to 25 March.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom's global technology partnership conference aimed to encourage greater technology co-operation between businesses in the United Kingdom and those in the more industrialised developing countries. Representatives of British business had the opportunity to establish contact with key business men and women from over 40 different developing countries, to learn of their local needs and difficulties and to offer solutions. The conference also discussed sources of help and funding available to United Kingdom and developing country businesses to assist technology co-operation. It generated much interest overseas and created opportunities for business follow-up. This should be facilitated through the three year follow-on initiative.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies from *(a)* Wales, *(b)* England, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* Scotland, *(e)* other nations of the European Community and *(f)* other nations outside the European Community were represented at the global technology partnership conference in Birmingham, from 23 to 25 March; what revenues were raised from the participation of these companies; and what benefits accrued from their attendance.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Representatives of companies from all areas of the United Kingdom were invited to the United Kingdom's global technology partnership conference. In addition, key individuals from businesses in 44 developing countries were invited.

There were 189 participants from the United Kingdom, including speaker/participants. Most were present for the three days of the conference, although a number exercised the option to attend for one day only. There were three participants from Wales, 178 from England, one from Northern Ireland and seven from Scotland. A total of 106 key business men and women attended from non-EC countries overseas. In addition, there were four speakers from EC member states.

Revenue raised from these delegates was approximately £26,000 with further sums raised through industrial sponsorship.

There are both potential commercial and environmental benefits for all businesses involved. United Kingdom participants were able to learn first hand of the environmental problems faced by businesses in developing countries and to discuss the solutions available in the United Kingdom. The conference also discussed sources of help and funding available to United Kingdom and developing country businesses to assist technology co-operation.

Sellafield

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the weekly cost to BNFL of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant remaining idle.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

British Nuclear Fuels plc has said that it assesses the reduction in profit arising from the delay in the THORP project at about £2 million a week.

Electrolysis and Massage

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the fees charged by each of the local authorities in the United Kingdom for licences to operate premises offering special treatments such as electrolysis or massage for which a licence is required by law.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Radiation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the health effects of radioactive discharges from *(a)* Amersham International plc in Cardiff and *(b)* the atomic weapons establishment at Llanishen.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Discharges of radioactive wastes may only be made in accordance with the terms and conditions of authorisations under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Authorisation is dependent upon the operators demonstrating that discharges will be below levels set by the Government to ensure that the public is not exposed to any significant radiological risk. Regular monitoring by the regulatory authorities has consistently shown that the discharges are made within such levels.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to increase radiation protection measures for members of the public in Wales following the details of radioactive contamination in the Principality included under each of tables 4.01 to 4.06 and 4.08 to 4.35 of the Environmental Digest for Wales 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The environmental monitoring exercises detailed in the digest form part of a routine monitoring programme which provides an additional check that members of the public are not being exposed to unsafe radiation levels. The data show that radioactivity levels from artificial sources are generally very small and declining, are in total substantially less than the levels resulting from natural sources and present no significant risk to public health. It is not therefore necessary to take steps to increase radiation protection measures for members of the public in Wales.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answer of 24 March by the Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley), *Official Report*, column *633-34* on the creation of registers of potentially contaminated land under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, how he will update table 1.48 on potentially contaminated sites by district in the Environmental Digest for Wales 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information in table 1.48 of the Environmental Digest for Wales 1992 is based on a survey of potentially contaminated land undertaken in 1988 on behalf of the Welsh Office. The survey information continues to provide a helpful guide to local authorities in undertaking their statutory duty to identify and tackle sites which pose a public health or environmental hazard; and the need to update it will be kept under review.

General Practitioners

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much and on what basis general practitioners are paid per head in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The independent Doctors and Dentists Review Body has responsibility for making recommendations to Government on the level of remuneration it considers appropriate for doctors and dentists in the national health service in Great Britain. Specifically, it is responsible for:

(i) the provision to be made for estimated practice expenses for the average GP;
(ii) intended average net income per GP;
(iii) the application of a balancing correction where appropriate;
(iv) a scale of fees and allowances designed to deliver the sum of (i), (ii) and (iii) (intended average gross income) to the average GP.

Following the decision that it would not be appropriate for the review body to make recommendations for 1993-94, announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 3 December 1992, and in line with the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement that public sector pay settlements for 1993-94 will be restricted to no more than 1·5 per cent., the intended average net income for general medical practitioners in England and Wales from 1 April 1993 is £40,610.

Council Tenants (Welfare Services)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to consult on the future funding arrangements and powers for local authorities to provide welfare services to council tenants in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office issued a consultation paper to local authorities, their associations and other interested bodies on 5 April. I have placed copies in the Library of the House.

The paper sets out proposals for the longer-term funding and provision of welfare services for tenants of local housing authorities. It proposes that housing authorities should retain powers to provide these services, which are being considered as part of the Housing and Urban Development Bill, until after local government re-organisation. The paper also sets out options for the exclusion of welfare services from the housing revenue account and the possible timing of such changes.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is consulting separately on these matters in England.

EMPLOYMENT

Travel-to-Interview Scheme

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the maximum financial assistance that can be claimed for overnight subsistence by unemployed people under the travel-to-interview scheme; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what are the maximum travelling expenses that can be claimed by unemployed people who are given assistance under the travel-to-interview scheme when they travel by *(a)* public or *(b)* private transport; and how many interviews they can claim assistance for.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 15 April 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions to her about the Travel to Interview Scheme (TIS). This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

It may be helpful if I explain the background to the scheme. TIS was introduced in 1986 to help with travel costs for unemployed people to attend job interviews in the United Kingdom but beyond daily travelling distance of their home area, thus widening the applicants' jobsearch, improving their chances of obtaining work and encouraging labour mobility. During 1991-92 the scheme helped 31,000 applicants at a cost of some £950,000. A few basic conditions must be met before assistance can be granted, to ensure that the limited funds available are concentrated on those unemployed people in most need. A leaflet outlining the scope of the scheme is enclosed.

People who are eligible for help with fares may also qualify for the cost of up to two nights stay which is unavoidable. The actual cost of the overnight accommodation is reimbursed up to a fixed limit which is currently £27·20 per night.

Eligible applicants may choose to travel by public transport or private vehicle. If they choose public transport the full costs of the cheapest convenient service are met by the scheme. Travel by private vehicle is reimbursed at a fixed rate of 16p per mile (increased from 15p on 5 April 1993). However the amount is limited to what it would have cost by convenient public transport.

You also asked about the maximum expenses which may be claimed. There is no ceiling as such on the total expenses which may be paid but any applicant failing to get a job after 20 interviews using TIS assistance would be counselled. Each subsequent interview which required TIS assistance would be considered carefully and assistance refused unless it was felt the applicant had a reasonable chance of getting the job.

I hope this is helpful.

As agreed in the Government's reply to the 1990 Treasury and Civil Service Committee Report "Progress in the Next Steps Initiative", I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House and in its Public Information Office.

ACAS

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects to receive the annual report of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received the ACAS report for 1992, which will be laid before both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday 20 April. The report is also to be published on that day and copies will then be available from the Vote Office.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Iraqi Students

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to making direct payments from frozen Iraqi Government accounts to Iraqi students and their host academic institutions in the United Kingdom for fees and support.

Mr. Nelson: We have always considered applications to debit Iraqi accounts for living and educational expenses of residents of Iraq in the United Kingdom. Reasonable amounts are normally permitted. However, the permission of the account holder must also be obtained before accounts can be debited.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson: I am aware of none so far as the Treasury is concerned.

Research Institutions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current practice on the effect of the receipt of grant income to Government research institutions from EC research programmes on the available resources of those institutions; and what arrangements are made for research institutions which are "next steps" agencies.

Sir John Cope: Payments from EC research programmes are available in full to add to the resources of Government research institutions. The precise level of resources available to a Government research institution is a matter for decision by the departments which are responsible for them. This is so whether or not the research institutions are "next steps" agencies.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what income the Government derived from EC research framework programme grants placed in Government research institutions and agencies in each year since 1990-91.

Sir John Cope: The bulk of EC research framework programme grants coming to the United Kingdom are paid directly to the private sector, including universities. Details of receipts to the private sector are not held centrally. Expenditure in relation to contracts with Government departments, agencies and research councils, which count as public sector receipts, was as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1990-91	5·0
1991-92	9·5
[1]1992-93	8·6

[1] estimated outturn

EDUCATION

Assisted Places

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answers of 29 March to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers), *Official Report*, columns *66-75*, if he will list the payments made and the average payment per student under the assisted places scheme to *(a)* Dame Allans Boys, *(b)* Dame Allans Girls, *(c)* Central Newcastle High, *(d)* Kings, Tynemouth, *(e)* La Sagesse Convent School, *(f)* Newcastle upon Tyne Church High and *(g)* the Royal Grammar, Newcastle.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

School name	Payments made in academic year 1991-92 £	Average payment per assisted pupil £
Dame Allans Boys	207,082	1,755
Dame Allans Girls	251,519	2,096
Central Newcastle High	218,220	1,898
Kings, Tynemouth	27,533	2,753
La Sagesse Convent	352,868	2,352
Newcastle upon Tyne Church High	33,586	2,239
Royal Grammar, Newcastle	487,375	1,853

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

North Korea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the security implications for the Korean peninsula and south-east Asia of North Korea's announcement of its intended withdrawal from the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Goodlad: There is widespread concern about the North Korean announcement of its intention to withdraw. We are working actively with other concerned Governments to encourage North Korea to retract its announcement.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the representatives of the civil community which the British high commissioner met during his visit to Jaffna on 18 February; and what issues were discussed at these meetings.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The high commissioner did not meet representatives of the civil community during his visit to Jaffna on 18 February.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure the maximum economic independence of the Falkland Islands from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Apart from the costs of defence, the Falkland Islands are economically independent of the United Kingdom.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 since June 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am aware of none so far as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is concerned.

Channel Islands

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress made with the German Government concerning the claims for compensation by Channel Island detainees deported to German internment camps during world war II; if he will make it his policy to raise also the position of merchant seamen from elsewhere in the United Kingdom who were similarly detained; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Representatives of the British and German Governments have, since German unification, been discussing the settlement of our claim in respect of the Channel Islanders illegally deported by the German occupation authorities. We have raised this with the Germans on many occasions and at many levels, including that of Foreign Secretary.

The German Government have told us definitively that they are not prepared to give the Channel Islanders any form of compensation or settlement. We are disappointed by the decision, but I regret that we see no realistic prospect that their claims can be met.

Merchant seamen detained by the Germans during the second world war fall into an entirely different category. Their detention was proper according to the rules of war. There is no question of claiming compensation.

Iraq

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that, either through the United Nations Secretary-General or unilaterally, monitors are sent into northern Iraq under resolution 688, to verify the human rights situation throughout the country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have consistently supported the proposal, put forward by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Iraq in his report of February 1992, for the positioning of human rights monitors throughout Iraq. With our European Community partners we co-sponsored the resolution passed at the Commission on Human Rights on 10 March 1993 which called on the Secretary General to take the necessary measures to send human rights monitors to Iraq. We will continue to do all we can to support him in carrying out this mandate.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps British diplomatic staff in the United States are taking to inform the people there, and in particular the incoming Congressmen, of the true situation in Northern Ireland and of the activities of members of the IRA.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our diplomatic staff in the United States, in close conjunction with the Northern Ireland Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, make every effort to ensure that key opinion-formers in the United States, including Congressmen, are aware of the true situation in Northern Ireland. Our information activities there include written and oral briefings, interviews and speeches by British officials, and visits to Northern Ireland by selected American opinion-formers.

China

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications Her Majesty's Government have had with the People's Republic of China on *(a)* nuclear testing and *(b)* nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have recently had discussions with Chinese authorities about the announcement by North Korea of her intention to withdraw from the non-proliferation treaty. We have had no recent bilateral communications with the Chinese on nuclear testing, but both subjects are discussed regularly in United Nations and other multilateral forums.

South Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary paid a successful visit to the Republic of Korea last week. He had full and useful exchanges with, among others, the President, the Foreign Minister, and the Defence Minister. As well as bilateral matters, their discussions covered regional and international issues including North Korea, market access, trade, technology co-operation, investment and the European Community. This was a very good opportunity to establish contact with the new South Korean Administration. My right hon. Friend also met and had useful discussions with representatives of the British business community.

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa (Arms Shipments)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *357*, if he will list the appropriate authorities to whom evidence on unlawful shipments of arms to South Africa should be submitted.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Bail

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many applications were made for bail to *(a)* the Crown court, *(b)* the High Court and *(c)* the Court of Appeal, during the last two years for which figures are available by persons whose application for bail had been refused by a lower court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not collected.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 since April 1982.

Mr. Key: My Department was formed in April 1992 and I assume that the question relates to the period since then. No certificates have been issued so far as the Department of National Heritage is concerned.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of holidays were undertaken by British domestic tourists in the United Kingdom in each year since 1985 *(a)* at the seaside, *(b)* in a small town, *(c)* in a large town, *(d)* in London, *(e)* in the countryside and *(f)* other.

Mr. Key: The available information is contained in the following table:

Domestic tourists in the United Kingdom/Great Britain
Percentage figures for type of location stayed at on all holidays trips are shown below:

Type of location stayed at	*1985 per cent.*	*1986 per cent.*	*1987 per cent.*	*1988 per cent.*	*1989 per cent.*	*1990 per cent.*	*1991 per cent.*
Seaside	34	35	31	36	—	40	40
Small town	18	17	17	18	—	17	18
Large town	12	14	14	14	—	18	18
London	7	7	8	6	6	5	5
Countryside	26	25	27	22	—	23	23
Unspecified	6	6	5	7	—	•	•

Sources: 1985 to 1988 figures—British Tourism Survey Monthly.
1989 to 1991 figures—United Kingdom Tourism Survey.

Notes:
1. The British Tourism Survey Monthly (covering the period 1985 to 1988) refers to holidays in Great Britain.
2. The United Kingdom Tourism Survey (covering the period 1989 to 1991) refers to holidays in the United Kingdom.
3. London is not included in the category "Large Town".
4. Holidays by location type were not covered by the 1989 United Kingdom Tourism Survey.

5. The symbol (*) is used to indicate a percentage of less than 0·5 per cent.
6. An individual year's percentages may sum to more than 100 per cent. This occurs because on any single holiday, it is possible to stay at more than one type of location.

Advisory Agencies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National heritage if he will list the membership of the heritage advisory agencies; what were the dates of appointment and terms of office for each individual; and what qualification was required for appointment.

Mr. Brooke: I have two bodies to advise me on issues relating to the built heritage: the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, commonly known as English Heritage, and the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. The members of these two bodies and their terms of office are listed in the tables.

Details of the qualifications for appointment to these bodies are contained in schedule 3 to the National Heritage Act 1983 for English Heritage, and in the royal warrant issued in 1992 for the royal commission. Copies of both documents are held in the Library of the House.

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage)

Commissioners	*Appointed*	*End of appointment*
Jocelyn Stevens CVO *(Chairman)*	[1] 1 September 1991	31 March 1997
Terry Farrell OBE	16 July 1990	15 July 1993
Sir David Wilson	16 July 1990	15 July 1993
Sir Hugh Cubitt CBE	[1] 1 January 1989	31 December 1994
Candida Lycett-Green	9 March 1992	8 March 1995
Roger Suddards CBE	9 March 1992	8 March 1995
Geoffrey Wilson	9 March 1992	8 March 1995
HRH The Duke of Gloucester	[2] 1 October 1983	30 September 1995
Dr. Ronald Brunskill OBE	[1] 1 October 1989	30 September 1995
Dr. Neil Cossons OBE	[1] 1 October 1989	30 September 1995
Lord Cavendish of Furness	1 October 1992	30 September 1995
Bridget Cherry	1 October 1992	30 September 1995
Julian Seymour	1 October 1992	30 September 1995
Jennie Page	15 April 1991	14 April 1996

Notes:
[1] Indicates second term of appointment.
[2] Indicates third term of appointment.
Current number of commissioners: 14
Maximum number of commissioners: 17
Minimum number of commissioners: 8

Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME)

Commissioners	*Appointed*	*End of appointment*
Baroness Park of Monmouth, CMG *(Chairman)*	1 October 1989	30 September 1994
Professor Richard Bradley	3 February 1987	2 February 1994
Dr. Derek Keene	3 February 1987	2 February 1994
Professor Geoffrey Martin, CBE	3 February 1987	2 February 1994
Bridget Cherry	2 September 1987	1 September 1994
Dr. Richard Gem	2 September 1987	1 September 1994
Professor Martin Biddle	[1] 1 December 1984	31 December 1995
Trevor Longman	14 March 1989	13 March 1996
Anne Riches	23 September 1991	22 September 1996
Robert Yorke	23 September 1991	22 September 1996
Professor Charles Thomas, CBE	[1] 30 March 1983	29 March 1997
Professor Gwyn Meirion-Jones	[1] 3 June 1985	2 June 1997

[1] Indicates second term of appointment.
Note: Appointments made by the Prime Minister.

National Transcommunications Ltd.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people applied and signed for the information memorandum for the sale of National Transcommunications Ltd.

Mr. Brooke: Fifty copies of the confidential information memorandum were sent out.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many competitive bids were *(a)* considered and *(b)* investigated for National Transcommunications Ltd.

Mr. Brooke: Three indicative bids were shortlisted; two continued preparation for bidding up until the final deadline.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much National Transcommunications Ltd. was sold for on privatisation; and how much it was valued at before sale.

Mr. Brooke: £70 million. This was towards the top end of the indicative valuation of the company. The National Audit Office report, published on 27 November 1992, concluded that the price was satisfactory.

Arts Council

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the planned summary allocation of Arts Council spending for 1993-94 by regional arts board areas and on a per capita basis.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* The figures requested are as shown in the table. It includes all Arts Council spending whether allocated centrally or regionally:

Regional arts board area	*Arts Council and RAB spending[1] 1993-94 (£000)*	*Population[2] (000)*	*Per capita (£)*
London	[3]72,254	6,794	10·63
Southern	4,778	4,548	1·05
South Eastern	3,196	3,945	0·81
South West	5,377	3,779	1·42
Eastern	7,125	5,708	1·25
East Midlands	4,701	3,342	1·41
West Midlands	[4]15,361	5,219	2·94
Yorkshire and Humberside	10,256	4,952	2·07
North West	11,202	6,474	1·73
Northern	6,361	3,075	2·07

[1] Includes grants to national companies. Does not include touring, for which no regional breakdown is available.
[2] Based on OPCS figures, 1990.
[3] Includes estimate of £3·332 million for support for the Royal Shakespeare Company's London activity.
[4] Includes estimate of £5·138 million for support for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what weight is given to population and to cultural deprivation in the assessment of Arts Council allocations to regional arts boards.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* In assessing allocation to RABs, the Arts Council takes population and cultural deprivation into account along with a range of other factors, one of which is the level of direct funding by the council to organisations within the RAB area.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department intends to provide guidance on the interpretation of the phrase "severe traffic congestion" in section 7 of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Freeman: My Department intends to issue guidance to traffic commissioners on their use of traffic regulation conditions under section 7 of the Transport Act 1985 as soon as possible after a decision has been reached on the current appeal to the Secretary of State about the use of these powers in Sheffield. Interpretation of the phrase "severe traffic congestion" is a matter for the traffic commissioner in the light of prevailing traffic conditions.

London Buses

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the ages of the current fleet of full-sized buses in London; what provision for investment has been made for the future for buses; and what was the level of past investment in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Norris: The current average age of full-sized buses in the LBL fleet is 13·1 years. Bus investment expenditure is given in the table:

£ million

Year	*Investment expenditure 1993-94 prices*
1983	52·5
[1]1984-85	31·7
1985-86	20·9
1986-87	13·1
1987-88	3·7
1988-89	8·5
1989-90	15·2
1990-91	15·7
1991-92	24·9
1992-93	26·0

[1] 1984-85 was a 15-month year.

I understand that LBL plans to invest £12 million on new buses in 1993-94, which will be the last full year before the completion of privatisation of the LBL subsidiaries.

Transport Policy (Sustainability)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department is *(a)* carrying out and *(b)* commissioning into the sustainability of transport policy.

Mr. MacGregor: The Department has established a group to monitor longer term and transport research. Projects are currently under way or have recently been completed in the following areas:

—demand management and forecasting;
—network modelling;
—transport and the environment;
—transport safety.

Environmental Achievements

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the environmental achievements of the designated Green Minister in his Department during the past year.

Mr. MacGregor: Speed limiters for new heavy goods vehicles were introduced on 1 August 1992. Certain existing vehicles over 16 tonnes will be required to have speed limiters from 1 August this year. These measures will improve fuel consumption and reduce emissions.

Since 31 December 1992 most new cars have required catalytic converters to meet tighter EC emission standards. The United Kingdom Government continues to press for even tighter emissions and noise standards for vehicles and to discuss with other member states and the Commission measures to improve the fuel efficiency of new cars.

In 1992-93 some £4 million was allocated for bus priority measures, which will encourage the use of buses. A further £15·5 million has been allocated for 1993-94.

At the beginning of March the Department published "The Good Roads Guide". The guide is aimed at professionals involved in the design of trunk roads. It is essentially a checklist and source book covering many of the issues that have to be tackled in designing roads to make them as environmentally satisfactory as possible.

We are working on a number of other initiatives for 1993-94, including the publication of: an updated "Manual of Environmental Appraisal", "The Wildflower Handbook" and "The Design Guide for Environmental Barriers".

Pedestrian Routes, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what overall strategy for London his Department has undertaken to improve and increase pedestrian routes;

(2) what overall strategy for London his Department has undertaken to co-operate in the improvement and proliferation of pedestrian routes;

(3) what overall strategy for London his Department has undertaken with the Metropolitan police to advise or co-operate with London boroughs on the upgrading, improvement and proliferation of pedestrian routes in the interests of safety.

Mr. Norris: Local authority circular 5/92 (copy in the House of Commons Library) states the Department's policies with respect to facilities for pedestrians in London. The main responsibility for pedestrian routes rests with the London boroughs. Borough schemes that enhance pedestrian safety may be eligible for transport supplementary grant as a local safety scheme. Additionally, the traffic director for London will fund the development and introduction of pedestrian facilities which he approves as part of the priority (red) route local plan process.

DVOIT

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the names of the companies shortlisted in the tender for the privatisation of the Drivers, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology Agency.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Companies interested in purchasing DVOIT have put forward their responses to the advertisement in the EC *Official Journal,* and to subsequent requests for information, in confidence, and it would not be right for me to list them.

M11 Link

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Hackney M11 link plan.

Mr. Norris: The scheme will provide a strategic link between the A102(M) east cross route at Hackney Wick and the junction of the M11, the A12 and the A406 North Circular road at the Redbridge roundabout east of Wanstead. It will comprise about 3·75 miles of continuous, dual-carriageway trunk road.

It will relieve existing unsuitable roads of strategic traffic. Stratford, Leyton, Leytonstone and Wanstead will all benefit when the heavy through traffic is removed from residential and shopping streets.

Following the recent successful defence of a challenge to the scheme in the High Court, tenders have been reinvited. We aim to start work in Wanstead in the autumn. The whole scheme will take about four years to complete.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional aircraft movements he estimates as a result of the construction of a fifth terminal at Heathrow.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not produce forecasts for aircraft movements. The number of aircraft movements at Heathrow and its relation to terminal capacity may well be a matter for debate at the public inquiry into a fifth terminal.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the number of passengers transferring to the new rail link from Paddington to Heathrow from *(a)* private cars, *(b)* tube and *(c)* road public transport.

Mr. Norris: I understand that the Heathrow link is expected to carry about 6 million passengers a year. The Department has not produced detailed estimates of transfer from each alternative mode.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional passenger journeys to and from Heathrow airport he estimates will result from the construction of a fifth terminal at Heathrow by *(a)* rail and *(b)* road; and what is his estimate of the numbers travelling by road by *(a)* public transport and *(b)* private cars.

Mr. Norris: The Department will be working on figures as part of its examination of the British Airports Authority's proposals for a fifth terminal.

Some estimates of this kind have been prepared by BAA and are contained in the environmental statement issued in connection with its planning application for a fifth terminal. I am putting a copy in the House Library.

Strategic Authority, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has had from outside bodies calling for a single strategic authority to oversee transport, land use and environment in London; and if he will list them.

Mr. Norris: We have received a number of representations suggesting that some sort of agency is required to oversee transport, planning and related issues.

These have included the former National Economic Development Council in its "Amber Alert" report and the CBI's London region in the interim report of its transport task force.

Aircraft Movements

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional aircraft movements he estimates at Gatwick, Luton, Stansted, Heathrow and London City on a year on year basis until 2010.

Mr. Norris: My Department does not produce forecasts for aircraft movements in the format requested. However, the RUCATSE working group on runway capacity to serve the south east will be considering assumptions about aircraft movements. Its report will be published later this year.

British Transport Police

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the future of the British Transport police following *(a)* publication of the consultative document, "The Future Status of the British Transport Police" and *(b)* 2 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Some 50 responses to the consultation document have been received, two of them since 2 February. In addition, I have met representatives of the British Transport Police Federation. Many of the comments we received emphasised the desirability of the force remaining under public sector control, and the importance of standards of law and order being maintained. The consultation period has now closed and we will publish our conclusions shortly.

I have already announced that it is the Government's intention to ensure that the British Transport police will remain in the public sector as a single unified force. There is no intention to split "L" division from the rest of the force, so policing of the London Underground will continue largely as at present. We propose, through licensing, to make it compulsory for operators to use BTP for law and order purposes.

Railway Investment

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what moves he is considering to create a framework to maximise private sector investment in the railway network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the autumn statement on 12 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 996, the Government's support for joint ventures between the public and the private sector for the construction of infrastructure, along with a £150 million special leasing arrangement for BR in respect of new rolling stock. My right hon. Friend has since announced in the Budget on 16 March 1993, *Official Report*, column 194, the Government's commitment to joint ventures for the channel tunnel rail link, crossrail and Heathrow express.

These new measures are set in the overall context of the Government's proposals to privatise and liberalise the railway, which will encourage the development of an efficient and modern industry responsive to customer requirements, and thus encourage private sector investment.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what positive representations he has received from the private sector to build new railways following publication of the Railways Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has received a number of representations from private sector parties interested in the financing and construction of new railways; the details are commercially confidential.

Rail Freight

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific criteria he has established for companies seeking grants under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Applications for freight facilities grants under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 have to meet both environmental and financial criteria. Applicants have to demonstrate that the provision of rail facilities will result in the traffic in question being moved by rail, rather than over unsuitable roads, and that the proposed facilities could not be justified commercially without assistance.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received following his proposal to sell the British Rail freight business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has received a number of expressions of interest in the Government's plans for privatising and liberalising rail freight.

Discussions with interested parties have been on a commercially confidential basis.

Railway Heritage Trust

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the future of the Railway Heritage Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I met Mr. Leslie Stone, a director of the Railway Heritage Trust, on 11 February to discuss future funding for the trust. I expect discussions to take place between the Railway Heritage Trust and those concerned in British Rail with the formation of Railtrack to cover future funding of the trust.

Steam Railways

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure the future operation of Britain's steam railways following publication of the Railways Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Railways Bill contains powers for the Secretary of State to exempt railways individually or by class from the requirements for licensing, franchising and open access it imposes. The Government will grant appropriate exemptions to preserved railways, and will consult interested parties on the form of exemption.

Rail Fares

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the future of the present range of reduced fares and railcards since publication of the Railways Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about these matters.

After privatisation, the offer of railcards and discounted ticketing arrangements will be a matter for operators' judgment, as it is now for BR. Through tickets will continue to be available in a range of ticket and fare types, but it will be for operators to determine their price by negotiation. In a competitive environment there will be every incentive for operators to seek to attract custom and maximise revenue by offering discounted tickets.

The Government therefore see no need to impose specific requirements on operators to offer particular types of discount facility, with the exception of the disabled persons railcard which is provided voluntarily by British Rail and does not make a profit. We have announced our intention that all passenger rail franchisees should be obliged to offer common discount facilities to disabled people on broadly similar lines to the present arrangements.

Railway Pensions

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received following the publication of "Railway Pensions after Privatisation"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 1 April to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), *Official Report*, column *362*.

Motorways

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department has for *(a)* new additional motorway service areas and *(b)* lighting additional sections of unlit motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 1 April 1993]:* Under a new policy announced on 6 August 1992, it is now for the private sector rather than the Government to identify where there is a need for further motorway service areas and to secure their development. There are, however, sites on the M6, M11, M20, M25 and M40 (two) where planning clearance for motorway service area use was granted to the Department before the new policy was announced. We are continuing to pursue development of these sites jointly with the private sector.

Motorway lighting is provided, subject to environmental appraisal, where it can be justified on safety grounds, taking account of the savings in night-time accidents. When motorways are widened to four lanes it is general policy to install lighting. Over the period to 1996 I expect lighting to be installed on more than 90 miles of motorway.

SCOTLAND

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department and the Lord Advocate's office last conducted surveys of *(a)* ethnic origins and *(b)* the number of women among their employees; when they next plan to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My Department conducted a voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff in 1987 with a follow-up, reminder exercise in 1989 and thereafter all new entrants have been invited to complete questionnaires.

Following the 1987 survey, the employment of persons from ethnic minorities is also constantly monitored by the Lord Advocate's Department.

Neither Department has any plans to conduct additional surveys of ethnic origins.

In both Departments surveys of women employees are unnecessary as the sex of all employees is clearly identified in staff records.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to recruit women, members of ethnic minorities and disabled people, respectively, in top grades of employment at the Scottish Office and at the Lord Advocate's Department.

Mr. Lang: Recruits to the senior grades (as to any grade in the civil service) are selected on merit on the basis of fair and open competition, unless one of the exceptions permitted under the Civil Service Order in Council 1991 applies. Various steps have been taken by the civil service commissioners to aid recruitment from all sectors of the community including:

extending links with higher education institutions;
equal opportunities training for those involved in selection;
using validated selection procedures.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in each grade from 1 to 7 and overall in his Department and in the Lord Advocate's Office are *(a)* women, *(b)* from ethnic minorities and *(c)* disabled people.

Mr. Lang: The number and percentage of officers in grades 1-7 and in total in my Department who were *(a)* women (as at 1 April 1992), *(b)* from ethnic minorities (as at 1 April 1992) and *(c)* disabled persons (as at 1 July 1992), are as follows:

Grade (and equivalents)	*Women*	*Percentage*
1	—	—
2	—	—
3	3	11·5
4	1	6·2
5	17	12·6
6	36	17·1
7	68	14·7
Total (head count)	2,828	44·9

The total number of officers employed in my Department who described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority was 27 or 0·4 per cent. Of that number one grade 7 is so described (0·2 per cent. of that grade).

At 1 July 1992 there were two registered disabled officers at grade 6 level in my Department which represented 1 per cent of staff in that grade.

The total number of registered disabled staff was 86 which represented 1·4 per cent. of the total staff. In addition there were eight officers who described themselves as disabled, which represented a further 0·1 per cent. of staff. Two of these staff were at grade 7 level.

In the Lord Advocate's Department, the number and percentage of officers in grades 1 to 7 and in total who were *(a)* women (as at 1.4.92), (b) from ethnic minorities (as at 1.4.92) or (c) disabled persons (as at 1.7.92) are as shown below:

Grade	*Women*	*Percentage*
1	—	—
2	—	—
3	—	—
4	—	—
5	3	10
6	4	10
7	63	49
Total (head count)	768	70

There were no officers in the Lord Advocate's Department who described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority, nor were there any registered disabled persons in grades 1 to 7 of the Department. There were, however, seven registered disabled officers in the Department in total, which represented 0·6 per cent. of the total staff.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Lang: Twenty-four.

Dental Care

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many non-exempt patients had dental check-ups in each of the last three years.

Mr. Stewart: Information is recorded on individual courses of treatment rather than patients treated. The total number of dental examinations for non-exempt patients is contained in the table.

Number of dental examinations carried out for non-exempt patients in Scotland

Year	*Number of examinations*
1990	1,587,607
1991	1,794,750
1992	1,815,098

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Lang: No certificates have been signed by myself or my predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), under section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 in the period since 1987.

Huntington's Chorea

Mr. Eric Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much money and resources the Lothian and Strathclyde health boards are providing for sufferers of Huntington's disease;

(2) how many cases of patients with Huntington's disease there are in Lothian and Strathclyde; and how many are in need of constant care;

(3) how many chronically ill Huntington's disease patients in constant care are in charitable institutions in Lothian and Strathclyde.

Mr. Stewart: At 31 December 1992 there were 30 patients in hospital with a diagnosis of Huntington's Chorea who were normally resident in Lothian and Strathclyde. The other information requested is not held centrally.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Eric Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he has given to health boards on alternative use of vacant hospitals or institutions prior to closure.

Mr. Stewart: Current guidance requires that consideration is given to alternative health related use for vacant hospital or other NHS property before it is regarded as surplus to NHS requirements.

Obscenity (Sentences)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sentences available to courts in dealing with obscene, violent and pornographic material; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *(holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The table summarises the main statutory offences and maximum penalties in relation to obscene, violent and pornographic material. Additionally, common law offences such as shameless indecency may be relevant. The maximum sentence for a common law offence on conviction on indictment in the sheriff court is an unlimited fine and three years' imprisonment, or in the High Court an unlimited fine and life imprisonment.

Statutory provision	*Offence*	*Maximum sentence*
1. Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982		
(a) section 51(1)	Displaying obscene material in a public place.	On summary conviction, a fine not exceeding the prescribed sum (currently £5,000) and 3 months' imprisonment. On conviction on indictment, a fine and 2 years' imprisonment.
(b) section 51(2)	Publishing, selling or distributing or, with a view to its eventual sale or distribution, making, printing, having or keeping obscene material.	As above.
(c) section 51(2A)	Including obscene material in a programme included in a programme service or, with a view to its eventual inclusion in such a programme, making, printing, having or keeping obscene material.	As above.
(d) section 52	Taking, or permitting to be taken, an indecent photograph of a child; or distributing or showing such a photograph; or possessing such a photograph with a view to distributing or showing it; or publishing or causing to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that the advertiser distributes or shows such a photograph.	As above.

Statutory provision	Offence	Maximum sentence
(e) section 52A	Possessing any indecent photograph of a child.	On summary conviction, a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (£5,000).
2. Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981		
(a) section 1	Publicly displaying, or causing or permitting the public display of, indecent matter.	On summary conviction, in the district court a fine of £200 and in the sheriff court a fine of the prescribed sum (£5,000). On conviction on indictment, a fine and 2 years' imprisonment.
3. Video Recordings Act 1984		
(a) section 9	Supplying, or offering to supply, an unclassified video recording.	On summary conviction, a fine not exceeding £20,000.
(b) section 10	Possessing an unclassified video recording for the purpose of supply.	As above.
(c) section 11	Supplying a classified video recording in breach of its classification.	On summary conviction, a fine not exceeding level 5 (£5,000)
(d) section 12(1)	Supplying or offering to supply, at a place other than a licensed sex shop, any classified video recording whose supply is restricted to licensed sex shops.	As above.
(e) section 12(3)	Possessing a classified video recording, the supply of which is restricted to sex shops, for the purpose of supplying it at any place other than a sex shop.	As above.
(f) section 13	Supplying, or offering to supply, a video recording in breach of labelling requirements.	As above.
(g) section 14(1)	Supplying, or offering to supply, an unclassified video recording that contains a false indication as to its classification.	As above.
(h) section 14(3)	Supplying, or offering to supply, a classified video recording that contains a false indication as to its classification.	As above.
4. Post Office Act 1953		
(a) section 11	Sending indecent or obscene material in a postal packet.	On summary conviction, a fine not exceeding the prescribed sum (£5,000). On conviction on indictment, 12 months' imprisonment.

HM Prison, Greenock

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the visitor facilities for disabled visitors to Her Majesty's prison, Greenock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 22 March 1993]*: A general refurbishment of the reception area for those visiting prisoners was completed at the end of 1992. A ramp provides access for the disabled. Plans have been drawn up for the provision of a toilet for disabled visitors. The installation will be completed by the end of June 1993.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the results of the Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiry May 1992 will become available.

Mr. Burt: An announcement will be made shortly on the publication date via the Central Statistical Office's monthly press notice on the release dates of statistical series.

Education Courses

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether unemployed income support claimants can undertake courses of higher education under the 21-hour rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: People in higher education who are not students following a full-time course of study may receive benefit under the income support 21-hour rule provided they fulfil the normal conditions laid down.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to raise the level of invalid care allowance and the carer premium in light of the introduction of value added tax charge on domestic fuel.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

VAT on domestic fuel will be introduced in April 1994 and extra help will be given to people on low incomes. An announcement giving details of this extra help will be make this autumn.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to extend entitlement to the carer premium to carers over the age of 65 years, following the introduction of a value added tax charge on domestic fuel.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 25 January at col. *583*.

Council Tax

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many copies of his information folder, "Introduction to Council Tax Benefit," have been published; at what cost; and to whom it has been distributed.

Mr. Burt: The information pack, "Introduction to Council Tax Benefit," was produced primarily for advisory bodies. It has been sent to all Members of Parliament, Citizens Advice Bureaux area offices, War Pensioners Welfare Services offices, DSS information officers, and other interested parties. 1,200 copies have so far been produced at a total cost of £5,835.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultancy contracts his Department has placed with BDO Binder Hamlyn to evaluate nuclear costs over the past year.

Mr. Eggar: None. BDO Binder Hamlyn's report, which verified information provided by Nuclear Electric on the costs of the company's Magnox stations and was used by Ernst and Young in its study for the coal review, was carried out by BDO as external auditors to Nuclear Electric.

Mr. Hood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what material is used in the Sizewell B vessel head penetrations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* This is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Mr. Hood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the lessons to be drawn from vessel head penetration cracking in VHPs made of Inconel 600 in French PWR reactors; and what is their application to Sizewell B.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate will consider any implications for Sizewell B arising from the discovery of cracking in vessel head penetrations in French PWRs during the pre-operational assessment of the power station which it is currently undertaking. The NII will not allow Sizewell B to start up until it is assured that it is safe to do so.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral statement of 25 March, *Official Report*, column 1227, what changes have been made in the planned scope of the nuclear review originally announced by his predecessor in November 1989 following his decision to bring it forward.

Mr. Eggar: As stated in the White Paper, "The Prospects for Coal", a further announcement about the review of the future prospects for nuclear power will be made later this year.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the definitions of avoidable and unavoidable costs as used in his Department's assessment of the economics of nuclear energy.

Mr. Eggar: The avoidable costs associated with Nuclear Electric's Magnox power stations were defined in Ernst and Young's study to be the difference between the entire future cash outflows of total closure and each of the other scenarios. The unavoidable costs were those costs which were not avoidable.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he received from Nuclear Electric to exclude details of financial costing of its magnox programme from the version of the review of magnox avoidable and unavoidable costs by Ernst and Young prepared for his coal review.

Mr. Eggar: I made clear in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 26 October last year that my intention is to publish all evidence and the findings of the coal review to the fullest extent possible except where information had been provided in confidence and was commercially sensitive. On this basis, my Department agreed with Nuclear Electric to remove such commercially confidential material from Ernst and Young's report. The full report was, however, provided on a confidential basis to the Trade and Industry Committee.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many tonnes of spent Magnox nuclear fuel have been contracted to British Nuclear Fuels and its predecessor company by Nuclear Electric and its predecessor since the first Magnox reprocessing contracts were agreed.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the studies he commissioned by Ernst and Young and BDO Binder Hamlyn on magnox costs took into account the liabilities that would be incurred in an accident at a magnox nuclear plant involving a breach of containment of the reactor core.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric's liabilities under the Nuclear Installations Act for public compensation as a result of an incident at a Magnox station are covered by insurance. The related insurance premiums were included in the costs covered by the Ernst and Young and BDO studies and treated as avoidable.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Eggar: Inquiries completed within the time available indicate that no exemptions under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 have been signed by the President of the Board of Trade or his predecessors in the period since 1987. Three exemptions were approved by the Secretary of State for Energy in 1987, one in 1988 and none after that up to the merger with the Department of Trade and Industry. If my further inquiries identify that any additional exemptions have been authorised I will respond further to the hon. Member.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is responsible for a total of over 800 public appointments. Of these 17 require a submission to the Prime Minister.

BNFL

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the offices British Nuclear Fuels plc has, or plans to, set up in eastern European countries;

(2) what contracts BNFL has signed or been offered under the TACIS and PHARE programmes.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the purpose of the BNFL-run information centre in Moscow.

Mr. Eggar: British Nuclear Fuels plc does not operate such an information centre.

Environmental Achievements

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what have been the environmental achievements of the designated Green Minister in his Department during the past year.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has designated me as the Green Minister for the Department. During the past year, we have as part of the departmental objective adopted a clear commitment to: take proper account of environmental issues in the development of its policies; stimulate an effective business response to environmental developments; and ensure that the Government's overall environmental policy takes proper account of the impact on business.

DTI's recently published annual expenditure plans report for 1993-94 to 1995-96 highlights a number of our specific environmental achievements. These include the technology partnership initiative, launched by the Prime Minister at a major conference in March, which aims to encourage the transfer of environmental technology and expertise to industrialising developing countries. The Department continues to undertake substantial awareness-raising activities; for example, nearly 4,000 small and medium-sized enterprises attended DTI roadshows last year.

Also, DTI operates a number of major grant schemes for supporting innovation in environmental technology, with grants of around £12·5 million committed to date. In relation to its estate, the Department has recently adopted a green housekeeping policy.

In formulating our policy in the environmental area in general, I attach importance to the advice of the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment. The committee also provides a useful forum for business to influence the environmental debate and promote better environmental performance.

Civil Servants (Secondment)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number, grade and destination of civil servants in the Department of Trade and Industry who have been seconded to manufacturing industry for each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The number of DTI staff on long-term secondments to business organisations, including manufacturing industry, in each of the calendar years from 1979 to 1992 were as follows:

	Number
1979	30
1980	33
1981	25
1982	35
1983	41
1984	43
1985	44
1986	37
1987	34
1988	31
1989	40
1990	52
1991	55
1992	53

Additional details on each of these secondments can be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, for each of the last five years, the duration, value and nature of contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen, Andersen Consulting, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse.

Mr. Eggar: The consultancy contracts awarded by the DTI to KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock, Touche Ross, Ernst and Young and Price Waterhouse in the periods 23 March 1988 to 22 March 1989, 23 March 1989 to 22 March 1990, 23 March 1990 to 22 March 1991, 23 March 1991 to 22 March 1992 and 23 March 1992 to 22 March 1993, giving the duration and nature for each, are listed in the table. The values of individual contracts are commercially confidential. No contracts have been awarded to Arthur Andersen, or Andersen Consulting.

Price Waterhouse

Nature of study/contract	*Start date*	*End date*
1988-89		
Management and Change Study	3 November 1988	20 January 1989
Japan Tourism Study	23 January 1989	28 March 1989
Japan 'Body Products' Market Study	31 January 1989	24 May 1989
1989-90		
Telecom Market Advisor	18 May 1989	17 May 1990
Patent Office Accounting Study	8 May 1989	31 July 1989
English Unit Consultancy	2 January 1990	31 January 1990
Accountancy Consultancy: the Patent Office	23 March 1990	31 October 1990
1990-91		
Companies House: development of a commercial accounting systems	1 October 1990	7 December 1990
Introduction of quality system complying with BS5750	25 October 1990	31 March 1991
British Technology Group: financial advice	17 December 1990	31 December 1990
Patent Office: accountancy consultancy	1 January 1991	31 March 1991
1991-92		
Financial Advice on BTG privatisation (Phase II)	1 April 1991	31 March 1992
Market Study: market opportunities for producers of carpets	5 August 1991	29 February 1992
Inward Investment: tax study	1 October 1991	26 November 1991
Implementation of Fairs and Promotions Branch Scrutiny Report	28 October 1991	20 December 1991
TQM Programme for DTI North East	26 February 1992	31 August 1992
Privatisation of BTG	11 February 1992	6 March 1992
1992-93		
Privatisation of BTG: Portfolio of Technologies	16 March 1992	31 March 1992
Study of Parcelforce	24 August 1992	31 October 1992
Information and Library Services: Information Systems Strategy	9 November 1992	29 January 1993
Market Testing: Pay Section and Payroll	25 February 1993	30 September 1993
Updating of Guide to Tax Aspects of Inward Investment	26 February 1993	13 April 1993
Total value	£2,364,765	

The figures do not include contracts issued by those Executive Agencies which have delegated authority to engage consultants.

Touche Ross and Co.

Nature of study/contract	*Start date*	*End date*
1988-89		
Frequency Planning Organisation: Trial	18 October 1988	6 January 1989
Advice on the National Engineering Laboratory privatisation; British Aerospace Launch Aid; and Ferranti Mess Levies	2 September 1988	30 April 1989
National Engineering Laboratory Study	29 November 1988	30 June 1992
British Business	13 February 1989	20 February 1989
1989-90		
Assessment of Consultancy Initiatives in Industry	4 December 1989	9 February 1990
1990-91		
Speech & Natural Language Consultancy	11 July 1990	31 December 1990
Study of International Environmental Negotiations	4 January 1991	21 January 1991
1991-92		
Market Opportunities Task Force: Policy Study	20 June 1991	16 August 1991
Speech & Natural Language Programme: Rationale, Objectives, Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation (ROAME) Statement	22 April 1991	16 September 1991
Knowledge Based Systems Technology Transfer Programme	11 July 1991	31 May 1992
Study on Technology Transfer in Conservation of Biological Diversity	10 July 1991	26 July 1991
Information Systems Strategy Study	5 August 1991	20 December 1991
Market Opportunity Task Force Policy Study: Market Change Analysis	29 November 1991	13 December 1991

Nature of study/contract	Start date	End date
1992-93		
Study of Chlorofluorocarbons Usage in Solvent	15 June 1992	25 September 1992
British National Space Centre Space: Telecommunications Strategy	1 October 1992	7 April 1993
Registry of Information Sources	14 September 1992	6 November 1992
Neural Computing: Awareness Programme	21 September 1992	30 September 1995
Technology Partnership Initiative	4 November 1992	19 December 1992
Comparative Study on Freight/Shipping Costs and Services	4 January 1993	28 February 1993
Preparation Production & Printing of Guidance Manual	5 March 1993	9 April 1993
Total value	£4,115,209	

The figures do not include contracts issued by those Executive Agencies which have delegated authority to engage consultants.

Ernst and Young

Nature of study/contract	Start date	End date
1988-89		
Mineral Intelligence Evaluation	2 February 1989	31 August 1989
1989-90		
Inward Investment	30 March 1989	3 May 1989
DTI Enterprise Initiative Scheme: Contractors Review	18 September 1989	30 November 1989
USSR: Consultancy Opportunities	31 July 1989	23 October 1989
Industrial Minerals and Metals Market	18 December 1989	16 March 1990
Arbitration project	30 January 1990	31 October 1992
1990-91		
Electronics Components: purchasing policies	5 April 1990	29 June 1990
Yorkshire & Humberside Development Association Review	11 September 1990	23 November 1990
Manufacturing Intelligence Newsletter	28 September 1990	30 June 1993
Training Needs Analysis for Insurance Division	3 December 1990	31 January 1991
Investment in the UK Market	28 January 1991	13 March 1991
Yorkshire & Humberside Development Association	7 January 1991	31 March 1991
1991-92		
Returns Made Under the Insurance Companies Act	25 March 1991	31 May 1991
Comparative Advantage Location Study	18 August 1991	31 October 1991
Study of European Legislation Affecting Businesses	22 October 1991	30 April 1992
Promotional Material: Electronics	5 December 1991	6 March 1992
Promotional Material: Automotive Components	5 December 1991	6 March 1992
Promotional Material: Information Technology	5 December 1991	6 March 1992
Advanced Robotics Programme Review	17 February 1992	30 July 1992
English Unit Strategy: 1992/93	3 February 1992	20 March 1992
England: Fact File	3 February 1992	20 March 1992
1992-93		
Devon & Cornwall Development Board Review	18 September 1992	14 December 1992
Services Sector: Opportunities for Inward Investment	22 July 1992	14 October 1992
Analysis of Structure and Activities of other European Inward Investment Agencies	9 September 1992	30 October 1992
Statistical Analysis of Foreign Investment in the UK from 1986/91	9 September 1992	30 October 1992
England – The Investment Opportunity: Revised Brochure	23 October 1992	15 January 1993
Coal Review 1992: Report on the Efficiency of British Coal as an Organisation	10 November 1992	31 December 1992
Insolvency Service: Market Testing	8 February 1993	16 April 1993
Determination of Location Factors	8 January 1993	16 April 1993
Nuclear Electrics Operations	2 December 1992	8 January 1993
Separate Studies of INWARD and Yorkshire & Humberside Development Agency	18 January 1993	12 March 1993
North West Venture Club	4 January 1993	31 March 1993
Key Location Factors Study	26 January 1993	31 March 1993
Production of Two Service Sector Promotional Brochures	8 March 1993	18 June 1993
Total value	£1,943,799	

The figures do not include contracts issued by those Executive Agencies which have delegated authority to engage consultants.

KPMG Management Consultancy

Nature of study/contract	*Start date*	*End date*
1988-89		
Higher Education and Industry Guide	24 March 1988	3 November 1989
Project Management of the Commercial Computer Security Centre, Royal Signals and Radar Establishment, Malvern	13 April 1988	4 May 1989
Management Best Practice: Awareness programme	22 August 1988	30 September 1988
FINMIS Post Implementation Review	14 March 1989	7 July 1989
Performance Measurement in Manufacturing Companies	12 January 1989	31 March 1989
Information Systems in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises	13 February 1989	12 May 1989
Market Assessment Study	24 February 1989	22 March 1989
1989-90		
Overseas Trade Information Systems Study	29 August 1990	19 April 1991
1990-91		
Perceptions of England	16 August 1990	30 September 1990
Open Distributed Processing	14 January 1991	12 April 1991
Open Systems Technology Transfer	1 January 1991	30 June 1991
1991-92		
New Product Introduction Activities	1 July 1991	16 August 1991
Market Assessment Study: Longer Term Open System Needs	1 March 1991	20 September 1991
Wirral Task Force; Enterprise Study	9 September 1991	24 January 1992
Export Intelligence Review	23 September 1991	20 December 1991
Open Systems Technology Transfer Programme	1 November 1991	31 March 1992
Technical Support to the Open Systems Technology Transfer Programme	1 January 1992	31 December 1992
Education Training Committee Strategy	27 January 1992	30 April 1992
European Futurewatch	14 February 1992	15 March 1992
Survey of Electronic Sources of Information on EC Legislation	18 February 1992	6 March 1992
Teaching Company Senior Academics Scheme	3 February 1992	2 March 1992
Evaluation Review of British Screen Finance Limited	3 March 1992	16 May 1992
1992-93		
Open Systems Programme 2	13 April 1992	30 June 1993
Delivering Information Solutions to Customers through International Standards Management Efficiency Study	8 June 1992	31 July 1992
Identification of Current and Long Term Issues in the Security Market and Policy Implications	3 August 1992	9 April 1993
Assist the London East Training and Enterprise Council in the Development of a Common Standards programme	1 July 1992	31 December 1992
Validation of Seven Information Technology Futures Sector Scenario Reports	17 July 1992	30 November 1992
Teaching Company Scheme: Review of the contract between the Science and Engineering Research Council and Cranfield Institute of Technology	27 July 1992	14 August 1992
Post Office	11 September 1992	31 March 1993
Production of a Guide to British Companies in the Environmental Field	23 November 1992	17 February 1993
Literature Searches for Branch 7 of DTI Posts and Telecommunications Division	21 December 1992	30 September 1993
Preparation of Seven Sector Reports on Key Applications for Information Technology	11 January 1993	5 March 1993
Customer Care Training	29 January 1993	22 March 1993
Market Testing: Export Market Information Centre	8 March 1993	8 April 1993
Total Value	£2,228,790	

The figures do not include contracts issued by those Executive Agencies which have delegated authority to engage consultants.

Defence Industries (Conversion)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the benefits that will accrue to the United Kingdom from the European Community's Konver programme for the conversion of defence industries to civilian activities.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decision has been taken on the financial allocation to member states under the Konver programme. We are currently considering the Commission's proposals for its implementation.

Coal Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made in the Energy Council to the Commission requests to the Council for assent on the Commission draft decision establishing community rules for state aid for the coal industry (SEC(92)2553 Final) of 27 January.

Mr. Eggar: The document has not yet been discussed by the Council.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements he has made to publish on a regular basis the subsidies given to British Coal in terms of the arrangements announced in his White Paper.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Details of financial assistance to British Coal will be published in my Department's annual expenditure plans report which is presented to Parliament.

Energy Production (Efficiency)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the comparative average efficiency of *(a)* all United Kingdom power plants, *(b)* gas-fired power plants and *(c)* combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Eggar: In 1991-92, the average gross thermal efficiency of fossil fuel-burning power stations in the United Kingdom was 34·1 per cent.
[Source: Digest of UK Energy Statistics, Table 52]

The efficiency of combined cycle gas turbines is generally expected to be around 45 per cent.

The efficiency of combined heat and power schemes varies considerably depending on their particular circumstances. Most such schemes in the United Kingdom are thought to have efficiencies in the range 70 per cent to 80 per cent.

Coal Review

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what remit was given to Ernst and Young in its preparation of the report on Magnox avoidable and unavoidable costs, undertaken for his coal review, dated 5 February.

Mr. Eggar: I gave a summary of the terms of reference for Ernst and Young's study in an answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 14 December last year, *Official Report*, column *25*. The full terms of reference are included in appendix A of the Ernst and Young report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

British Technology Group

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the sale of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Leigh: It was announced last year, *Official Report*, 11 March 1992, columns *559-60*, that the British Technology Group had been sold to a management-led consortium. I can now inform the House of the final outcome of discussions to settle the initial proceeds of the sale.

In accordance with clause 6 of the share purchase agreement, completion accounts were prepared by the purchasers for the purpose of determining the consideration to be paid for the purchase of the shares in BTG. It has not been possible for the Government and the purchasers to agree the completion accounts, but it has nevertheless been agreed that no payment should be made either way under the provisions of clause 6 of the agreement. The initial proceeds therefore remain at £27·75 million.

A copy of the letter expressing the agreement of the parties, and the completion accounts as originally submitted by the purchasers, has been placed in the Library of the House. Members will wish to note that the completion accounts were prepared for the sole purpose of determining the consideration to be paid for the purchase of the shares in BTG; they should not be interpreted as describing the trading position of BTG during 1991-92. A report and accounts were published by the company in August 1992, a copy of which has also been placed in the Library of the House.

The House may also wish to be reminded that additional proceeds may arise if over the five years to 31 March 1997 the business performs at a level in excess of the net revenues forecast by BTG management in its 1991 business plan. Further proceeds may also arise from clawback on the proceeds of sale of real property.

One-stop Shops

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the development of the one-stop shops for business support.

Mr. Heseltine: The six areas that will have the first pilot one-stop shops are Birmingham, Halton (North Cheshire), Hertfordshire, Manchester, South and East Cheshire and Tyneside.

Together, these areas provide a range of different models of the one-stop shop concept. Some offer single centres to serve a particular business community like Birmingham, and others offer hub and spoke networks to cover a larger geographical area like Hertfordshire. In total there will be 23 one-stop shops in these six areas. My Department has committed £5·57 million to funding these first pilots over three years.

There are several other areas whose plans have nearly reached the required standard but need some further development. My Department is in discussion with those areas and I look forward to receiving revised plans from them. I hope that this will lead to pilot one-stop shops being established in up to another nine areas in the course of this financial year.

My Department will also be providing support for the development of proposals for a London-wide approach to

the establishment of one-stop shops in the capital. A partnership of key organisations in the provision of business support services has already come together to produce initial ideas for a London-wide approach and the development funding will enable detailed proposals to be worked up for a comprehensive network of services with local outlets across London.

I am grateful to the one-stop shop national assessment panel for its help in assessing the shortlisted bids. The standard of bids was high. I hope that all areas will continue to build on the partnerships that have been established.

With this announcement of the first pilot one-stop shops, the plan to revolutionise the delivery of support services for business in England has taken an important step forward. I am confident that those areas selected will deliver a quality of service which will match or better that available to our industrial competitors in Europe and beyond. I am keen to see these first pilots operational as soon as possible and my Department will work closely with them to ensure they are a success.

Laboratory Work

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the value of work commissioned by his Department placed with *(a)* the Warren Springs Laboratory, *(b)* the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, *(c)* the National Engineering Laboratory and *(d)* the National Physical Laboratory in 1992-93; and what is the value of work planned to be placed in 1993-94.

Mr. Eggar: The following table shows the value of work DTI placed with these laboratories in 1992-93 and the value of work they are aiming to win from DTI in 1993-94.

Laboratory	*1992-93 (£)*	*1993-94 (£)*
Warren Spring Laboratory	3,190,000	2,750,000
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	7,200,000	5,509,000
National Engineering Laboratory	9,764,000	8,840,000
National Physical Laboratory	43,230,000	41,057,000

Domestic Fuel Supplies

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's estimate of the number of wholly 65-plus-year-old households that have *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity connected to their homes, for the latest available year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* My Department estimates that in 1991 the numbers of wholly 65-plus-year-old households connected to *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity were 3·6 million and 5·1 million respectively.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's estimate of the total income for *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity undertakings from domestic and standing charges.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* My Department estimates that the total amounts raised by gas and electricty undertakings in 1992 from standing charges on domestic customers in the United Kingdom were £0·6 billion and £1·1 billion respectively.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of 17 March, *Official Report*, column 271, what documents his Department has been asked to provide to Lord Justice Scott; what documents he has supplied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* Lord Justice Scott has requested a wide range of documents from my Department and no document requested is being withheld. It would not be appropriate to list them in detail.

Undersea Electricity Link

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation he has had with the members of the European Commission responsible for energy policy and regional development, and with his opposite number in the Irish Republic in relation to the funding of the undersea electricity transmission link between the national grid and the Irish electricity system; and what is his current estimate of a start date.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* There have been no discussions with the European Commission or with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's opposite number in the Irish Republic on the question of funding of the United Kingdom-Ireland electricity link. Further studies need to be undertaken before a reliable estimate of a start date can be given.

Plutonium (Air Transport)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the date and route of the next plutonium flight from Carlisle.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 April 1993]:* This is a matter for the operators concerned.

Recycling

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a study of the German waste disposal system whereby there is an advantageous financial incentive to return used bottles to manufacturers.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Deposit systems were among the mechanisms examined by Environmental Resources Ltd. as part of its study of "Economic Instruments and Recovery of Resources from Waste", commissioned by my Department and the Department of the Environment. This study was published by HMSO in December last year, and copies were placed in the Library of the House. It built on earlier work carried out by ERL on deposit/refund systems for beverage containers, which included an examination of deposit schemes being operated in Germany. Consultation on both these studies has taken place and the comments received will be taken into account by the Government in the development of recycling policy.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to promote a returnable outer crate system, and the re-usable MTS Tengelmann container system.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* It is for the judgment of those directly involved in distribution and

retailing to decide whether to use returnable outer crates, such as the MTS Tengelmann container system. I expect environmental impact and commercial advantage to be among the considerations that they take into account when reaching a decision.

Plastic

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to promote the depolymerising of plastic.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* My Department is currently supporting a number of projects in the plastics recycling area, although none relating specifically to the polymerising of plastics. I am aware, though, of work in this area being undertaken within industry, both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, which my Department is following closely.

Electricity

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning amendments to the Electricity Act 1989.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* The Trade and Industry Select Committee made a number of recommendations in its 1992-93 report "British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal" which could, if accepted, have required amendments to the Electricity Act 1989. The Select Committee's recommendations, and the Government's responses, are set out in chapter 16 of the recent White Paper, "The Prospects for Coal".

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning amendment of the Electricity Act 1989 to make the duty to protect the interests of the consumer one of the Secretary of State's primary statutory responsibilities; and what response he has given.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* The Trade and Industry Select Committee recommended that the duties of the Director General of Electricity Supply should be amended to make the protection of consumers one of his primary duties. The Director General has said that he does not believe such an amendment would be necessary to enable him to protect the interests of customers. Chapter 16 of the Government's recent White Paper, "The Prospects for Coal", makes it clear that the Director General already has a duty to protect consumers in terms of prices and other terms of supply and that the main protection for consumers is the development of effective competition. The promotion of competition is one of the Director General's primary duties.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to amending the Electricity Act 1989 to ensure the full costs of radioactive waste management and nuclear decommissioning associated with nuclear generated electricity are charged to electricity consumers on their electricity bills.

Mr. Eggar The Electricity Act 1989 already allows the Secretary of State to make regulations to impose a levy on all licensed suppliers of electricity in order to compensate the regional electricity companies for the additional costs incurred in contracting with Nuclear Electric, and the non-fossil generators, rather than fossil-fuelled sources. The premium paid to Nuclear Electric, together with income from electricity sales at the market price, enable the company to meet the full costs of generating electricity from its stations, including the full costs of radioactive waste management and decommissioning.

Mixed Oxide Fuel

Mr. Hood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the mixed oxide fuel demonstration facility (MDF) is expected to be operational.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* This is a matter for the Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels plc.

DEFENCE

Upholder Class Submarines

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *71*, when he expects to reach a decision about the future of Upholder class submarines.

Mr. Aitken: We are still considering some aspects of our future force structure to ensure that it aligns with our commitments and available resources. Decisions will be taken when our deliberations are complete.

Helicopters Adriatic

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when four of the 846 Naval Air Squadron Sea Kings were withdrawn from HMS Ark Royal; by what means they were returned to the United Kingdom; for what reasons they have been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Four Sea King helicopters from 846 Naval Air Squadron deployed to the Adriatic as part of the HMS Ark Royal group in January returned to the United Kingdom on board RFA Fort Austin in mid-March. The return to the United Kingdom of the light gun battery personnel enabled the helicopters to be released for other duties.

RFA Fort Victoria

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when RFA Fort Victoria was taken to FMRO Portsmouth; what unprogrammed work is required, and at what cost; what penalties will be applied to the contractor; when the ship is currently programmed to be accepted by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: RFA Fort Victoria was accepted from her builders, Harland and Wolff, on 24 March, and arrived at Portsmouth on 7 April where she will be based for a six-month programme of trials before entering service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. A number of defects remain and others may emerge during the trials. These will be rectified using the resources of FMRO Portsmouth as part of a co-ordinated programme. The cost of this work will be met by Harland and Wolff.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Prevention

13. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new crime prevention initiatives his Department will be taking in 1993.

Mr. Jack: New major developments are the setting up of a National Board for Crime Prevention and the reconvening of the ministerial group on crime prevention. We shall also be working on the expansion of our successful safer cities programme and we have commissioned a new good practice guide to help communities tackle their local crime problems in the most effective way.

Metropolitan Police

14. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future political control of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have already received representations about this subject from a large number of hon. Members. As I announced on 23 March, I propose to establish new police authority arrangements for the Metropolitan police. I will be developing my proposals in more detail over the next few months and set out more details when I publish my White Paper.

Police Funding

15. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to improve the system of police funding.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend's proposals include giving police authorities and police forces greater freedom to manage their own resources within a cash limit.

Operation Jackpot

16. **Ms Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to visit Stoke Newington police station to discuss Operation Jackpot.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Stoke Newington police station.

Illegal Weapons (Advertisements)

17. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning problems arising from the distribution of magazines containing advertisements for illegal and offensive weapons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of letters from hon. and right hon. Members, and from members of the public, about a mail order catalogue distributed here from the United States. He has also answered four parliamentary questions on this subject, and he has noted the concern expressed in an early-day motion.

Young Offenders

18. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about measures to reduce juvenile crime.

Mr. Jack: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others concerned about offences committed by juveniles. The statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend on 2 March gave a clear indication of the nature of the Government's response by committing it to the development of a new policy particularly aimed at dealing with the persistent juvenile offender.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders have been held in cells without window glass at Glen Parva young offenders centre in the last six months; and for what periods of time they were being held in those cells.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 14 April 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the numbers of young offenders held in cells without window glass at Glen Parva Young Offenders Institution.

There are no statistics available to show how many young offenders are located in cells without window glass or for how long they are held in those cells. Most cell windows are broken by prisoners and on many occasions by those due to attend court and who hope they will not be returning. If the prisoner responsible for the damage to the cell is returned to Glen Parva he will be normally located in the same cell until repairs can be done. However, it is local policy to avoid placing young offenders newly allocated to Glen Parva in cells with broken window panes. There is a continuous replacement programme for broken windows and the cost in the last financial year was over £14,000.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning his proposals to provide secure accommodation for young offenders.

Mr. Jack: As I stated in my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 17 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *248*, before my right hon. and learned Friend made his statement on 2 March Ministers and officials considered representations and views about the problem of persistent juvenile offenders from a wide range of individuals and organisations. Since 2 March, meetings have been held at official and ministerial levels with representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors. A series of further meetings is planned. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend has specifically invited the comments of more than 40 organisations in the field of working with juvenile offenders including the views of both sentences and also potential providers of secure accommodation.

28. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to deal with young offenders.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friend to the oral answer given earlier today to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

29. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for increasing the provision of secure accommodation.

Mr. Jack: The provision of secure accommodation for juveniles is the responsibility of local authorities who are overseen in this regard by the Department of Health. We are currently working on plans for the provision of the secure accommodation that will be necessary for persistent juvenile offenders subject to the secure training orders referred to by my right hon. and learned Friend in his statement on 2 March.

25. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to make parents more accountable for the behaviour of their children.

Mr. Jack: The Criminal Justice Act 1991, which came into force on 1 October last year, strengthened the powers of the courts to make parents more accountable. Courts can now bind over the parents of juvenile offenders to look after their children properly where they are satisfied that this would help prevent further offending; and, order parents to attend court with their children and to pay their children's fines. We are monitoring the effects of these provisions.

Prison Staff (Portland)

19. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are employed directly and indirectly by the Prison Department on Portland; and how many inmates and staff are planned for the future.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the director general that there are two establishments on Portland, the Young Offender Institution and the Verne prison.

The combined total employed at both establishments is 567½, of which 27½ are indirectly employed by the Prison Department, the balance of 540 being directly employed. A further 61½ people are engaged on a sessional basis providing essential educational, religious, medical, dental and ophthalmic services.

The combined inmate population is approximately 1,000.

There are no current plans to change established staffing levels or inmate numbers.

Police Committees

20. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what canons of selection he will establish for appointments to police committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet decided how the members of the new police authorities will be chosen. He will want to make sure that the membership of the police authority as a whole broadly reflects the experience and expertise which it needs.

Terrorism

21. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has in hand to review the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 forms an essential part of the Government's response to terrorist crime. The powers which it provides are kept under regular review and the operation of the Act is reviewed each year by a person appointed for that purpose.

24. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of what is essentially a preventative measure but the Prevention of Terrorism Act plays an important part in the prevention and investigation of terrorist crime and in restricting the movement of terrorists and their equipment. In 1992, 497 persons were charged in the United Kingdom following detention under the Act.

Sunday Trading

22. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give further details of his plans for the reform of the law on Sunday trading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have nothing to add to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary gave on 22 March to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler); we shall publish a draft Bill before the summer recess.

Police Reform

23. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held since his oral statement of 23 March, *Official Report*, column 765, on reorganising police forces in Wales using conterminous boundaries with the other emergency services.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Wiltshire Police Force (Merger)

26. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning a possible merger of the Wiltshire police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. I have no view at present on whether or not Wiltshire should amalgamate.

Immigration (USA)

27. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will visit the United States of America to discuss immigration policy.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

Prison Service Dog Section

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff and dogs are currently employed and used in the prison service dog section; and what plans the Home Office has for the dogs in the event of a decision to contract out the section.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 15 April 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the staff and dogs used in the Prison Dog Service and our plans for the dogs in the event of a decision to contract out the dog service.

A total of 434 staff are employed as dog handlers and 441 dogs are used for this work.

If the work of the dog service were to be contracted out all dog handlers would be asked whether they wished to keep their dogs. Any dog not taken on by their handlers would be offered to the Armed Forces, Customs and Excise or the Police in an effort to find them suitable work placements. If sufficient work placements could not be found then consideration would have to be given to having the dogs destroyed. While every effort would be made to avoid this position these are working dogs trained to bite and the options for suitable placements are limited.

Medomsley Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the prison department made available for sale the former HM prison Medomsley; how the sale particulars are described; what is the asking price; how much money has been spent on this establishment in each of the past five years; what have been its previous usages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 15 April 1993:

Former HM Prison Medomsley

I have been asked by the Home Secretary to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the former HM Prison Medomsley.

The property was placed on the market for sale as being surplus to requirements in December 1990 with Agents, Messrs Chesterton of Newcastle, and is described in the sale particulars as a 35 acre site with the opportunity for refurbishment or development. The property is offered for sale by private treaty and offers are invited. No purchase price has been quoted but the Agents are advising that offers should be in excess of £500,000.

The establishment formerly operated as a Detention Centre for Young Offenders until early 1987. It was then used temporarily as a Category C Prison for male adults until closing in November 1987. There has since been some occasional use for Control and Restraint training.

The expenditure in each of the past five years, mainly on skeleton staff and essential maintenance, was as follows:

	£K
1988-89	53
1989-90	47
1990-91	22
1991-92	20
1992-93	nil

I hope this is helpful.

London Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is to be the precise nature of the market testing exercise he proposed should be undertaken in repect of the work of the fire brigades' workshops currently run by the London fire and civil defence authority; and when he expects it to begin.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Officials of my Department are currently discussing with representatives of local authorities and chief fire officers the precise nature of the market testing exercise and how it will be carried forward.

Prison Education Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make education in prison compulsory for all offenders under the age of 25 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Young Offender Institution Rules 1988 currently provide that arrangements shall be made for inmates under the age of 17 to participate in education and training courses for at least 15 hours a week. The Prison Service will be considering, as part of its work on the development of a code of standards, what education facilities and entitlements should generally be available to prisoners.

Not all prisoners under the age of 25 years require education programmes, but they may benefit from opportunities to address their offending behaviour and other needs. The extension of sentence planning is directed to ensuring that prisoners' individual needs are increasingly identified and, where possible, met.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992 took public examinations; and what was the pass rate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Harry Greenway, dated 15 April 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about prisoners taking public examinations.

The available information held centrally is as follows:

Academic Year	*Inmates Entered*	*Pass Rate Per cent.*
Education and vocational training[1]		
1990-91	9,826	87
1991-92	8,977	82
Other Examinations[2]		
1990	3,436	66
1991	4,251	90
1992	4,159	93

[1] Organised and supervised by education departments.
[2] Construction industry training, Catering, other industrial and farms and gardens qualifications.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has to improve the waiting facilities for visitors to inmates being held in Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 15 April 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about visitors' waiting facilities at Wandsworth Prison.

Work is soon to begin converting a property which is close to the prison. We expect this work to be completed within two months.

Police Horses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police horses are currently in service in the metropolitan area; how many were in service *(a)* in 1983 and *(b)* in 1973; what is the future of Imber Court training centre under his projected proposals for police reorganisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are currently 190 horses in service with the Metropolitan police. At 31 December 1983 there were 176, at 31 December 1973 195.

It is not possible to say at this stage what impact the proposed reorganisation will have on Imber Court.

Veterinary Surgeons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that anyone with a commercial interest in a designated establishment is not appointed as named veterinary surgeon for the establishment under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, to avoid conflicts of interest.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend cannot lawfully exclude all veterinary surgeons with a commercial interest in a designated establishment from being considered for appointment as named veterinary surgeon. The suitability of every proposed named veterinary surgeon is considered before inclusion in a certificate of designation; where my right hon. and learned Friend has any reason to doubt the suitability of the proposed appointment, he will require a new name to be suggested.

Employment Protection

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to seek external legal advice on the application of the transfer of undertakings regulations in every case where contracting out is contemplated or may be contemplated for future action.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Home Office legal advisers will be consulted about the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available existing scoping reports on potential market testing exercises to the relevant staff associations and unions; and if he will place copies of the reports in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Scoping Study reports will be made available to Home Office trade unions, except where they contain classified material. As the reports are internal management documents I do not consider it appropriate to place them in the Library.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the financial implications of the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to Home Office functions which have been identified for market testing during 1993-94.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Potential contractors will be required to take account of the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the EC Acquired Rights Directive in their bids. Only at that stage will it be possible to make any assessment of the financial implications.

Port Controls

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the security implications of contracting out of any port control functions of the immigration and nationality department; and what safeguards would be introduced.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no plans to market test the work of immigration officers at ports of entry.

Remands Contract Unit

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed in the remands contract unit at the Home Office for the latest date available; and how many of them are legally trained.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 15 April 1993:

REMANDS CONTRACTS UNIT STAFF

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the staffing of the Remands Contracts Unit.

The Unit currently has 29 members of staff of whom 7 are engaged in on the spot monitoring of contract performance and associated work. None of its staff are legally trained; like other Home Office divisions, the Unit looks to the Department's Legal Adviser's Branch to meet its need for assistance or advice on any legal matter.

Prisoners (Childhood Background)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the proportion of sentenced male and female prisoners respectively who spent some or all of their childhood in care.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 15 April 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the proportion of the prison population who have been in care.

In answer to the question "were you ever taken into Local Authority care as a child up to the age of 16?" in the National Prison Survey, which was carried out in January and February 1991, 25 per cent. of sentenced male and 21 per cent. of sentenced female prisoners said they had been taken into care.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 16 April 1993

ENVIRONMENT

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the appointments made by him as listed in "Public Bodies 1992" came within the categories set out in paragraphs 49 and 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" and required a submission to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Howard: There were 27 appointments to the bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1992", sponsored by my Department, which required prior consultation with the Prime Minister under paragraph 50 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Howard: None.

Investment (Hackney)

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investment packages are available to private sector investors in Hackney to create jobs and housing.

Mr. Baldry: The following DOE programmes are available in Hackney:

City Challenge: £37·5 million over five years, to develop and improve the local business economy, develop the skills of local people and raise the quality and management of homes.

Housing: Following the Chancellor's autumn statement, an additional £10·8 million for housing associations to purchase homes and provide cash grants to enable housing association and council tenants to move into owner occupation. The estate action programme has also been successful in drawing private sector investment into the refurbishment of council estates.

City grant: The private sector in Hackney is able to bid for funding of individual projects.

Hackney task force: Provides loans/grants of up to £5,000 to small and and start up businesses.

Urban partnership funding: £125,000 for enterprise projects will lever in over £500,000 from the private sector as a result of this initiative.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to reassign the functions and responsibilities of the London residuary body *(a)* prior to abolition and *(b)* following abolition.

Mr. Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans. It is envisaged that the London residuary body will discharge its present functions and responsibilities until it is wound up.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the London residuary body to be wound up; and when its final accounts will be published.

Mr. Squire: The date of the winding up of the London residuary body (and hence the date of the publication of its final accounts) will depend upon the timing of the disposal of the County hall site and buildings.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the running costs of the London residuary body for each year to date.

Mr. Squire: Expressed in current prices, net expenditure by the London residuary body on general management or administrative services, including preparation and transfer of records to successor bodies by the London residuary body's administration department, was as follows in the years 1986-87 to 1992-93:

	£'000
1986-87	7,077
1987-88	4,285
1988-89	3,698
1989-90	3,043
[1]1990-91	7,599
1991-92	3,048
[2]1992-93	1,859

[1] On 1 April 1990 the London residuary body took on responsibility for winding up the affairs of the Inner London education authority.

[2] The figures for 1992-93 are from the London residuary body's 1992-93 original budget while for other years they come from the London residuary body's annual report and accounts.

County Hall

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the north, south and island blocks of County hall; how much they are valued at; and if he will make a statement on potential buyers.

Mr. Squire: The disposal of these properties is a matter for the London residuary body, which is at present actively marketing the land and buildings concerned.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the London residuary body will receive the proceeds of the sale of the main building of London's County hall; how much they are expected to be; and how they will be distributed.

Mr. Redwood: The timing and the amount of the receipt of the proceeds of the sale of the riverside building of County hall are matters of commercial confidentiality between the London residuary body and the purchasers. It is, however, expected that the ensuing capital receipt will be distributed to the London boroughs by 31 December this year. The method of distribution will be the subject of consultation between the Department and the London boroughs.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the disposal of all the buildings in the County hall complex to be completed.

Mr. Baldry: The disposal of the County hall site and buildings is a matter for the London residuary body, which is under a duty to sell the land and buildings concerned for the best obtainable price.

Gas Appliances

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *133-34*, how many prosecutions have been brought under *(a)* the Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations 1990 and *(b)* the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 for failure to maintain and repair gas appliances; and how many of these prosecutions have resulted in convictions.

Mr. Baldry: The survey of local authorities in England and Wales contained in the Institution of Environmental Health Officers annual report 1990-91 reports that 90 convictions were obtained for failure to comply with section 369 of the Housing Act 1985, under which the Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations 1990 are made.

The survey also reports that 719 notices were served under section 372 (power to require execution of works to remedy neglect of management). 403 of these were complied with (including those complied with by means of the local authority carrying out the works), and 12 convictions were obtained for failure to comply with a notice.

Information on the number of prosecutions specifically for failure to maintain and repair gas appliances, and on the number of prosecutions under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, is not held centrally.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to invite contributions from local authorities and other interested parties to his review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Officials in my Department have written to all local authorities in England inviting them to make representations on the review of standard spending assessments and to provide evidence to support any proposed changes.

There will also be regular meetings between my officials and representatives of the local authority associations until September to discuss the technical aspects of the review.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the staffing resources and the financial provision for external research that he proposes to devote to his review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* The review of standard spending assessments will involve work by my own Department in consultation with other Government Departments and the local authority associations. Work is already in progress using existing resources. Some external research is under way and more will be carried out where this is felt necessary.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

The Crescent, Buxton

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he will take to prevent further deterioration in the condition of the grade I listed former St. Ann's hotel in The Crescent, Buxton.

Mr. Key: In view of the lack of progress with the repairs specified in last December's repairs notice, my right hon. Friend has today authorised the service on the owners, Capitalrise Ltd, of a compulsory purchase order under section 47 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

This is the first time that my right hon. Friend's powers under section 47 have been used. This reflects the outstanding importance of the building. My right hon. Friend and I are not prepared to see it deteriorate further through neglect and indecision.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of persons arrested under the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act 1991 and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 for the period *(a)* September 1991 to December 1992 and *(b)* January 1993 to the present date.

Mr. Mates: The available information is as follows:

Period	*Number of persons arrested in Northern Ireland under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991*	*Number of persons arrested in Northern Ireland under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989*
1 September 1991—31 December 1992	92	2,382
1 January 1993—31 March 1993	Not yet available	438
Total	92	2,820

Note:
If an individual is arrested on more than one occasion he/she will be added to the statistics on each occasion.

Housing

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps it is intended to take to resolve housing needs in east and south Belfast, including the Castlereagh and Lisburn boroughs.

Mr. Atkins: The Housing Executive and housing associations have new building plans, which together with relets, are aimed at meeting housing needs. A total of 854 dwellings are presently under construction or planned by the Housing Executive over the next three years in east and south Belfast including the Castlereagh and Lisburn boroughs in addition to an estimated annual figure of some 1,970 relets. This will be complemented by housing association schemes currently under construction or planned to commence over the same period to provide 654 dwellings together with 109 bed spaces in shared accommodation.

Under the Government's house purchase scheme announced by the Chancellor in the autumn statement the Housing Executive and housing associations (including the Co-ownership Association) purchased a total of 126 dwellings in the area and these will further assist in meeting housing needs.

The Belfast urban area plan (BUAP) 2001 zoned land for housing development in the greater Belfast area to cover the period up to 1993. The Department of the Environment recently announced that it had commenced a mid-term reassessment of housing land needs in that area. This reassessment will be made with the assistance of the 1991 census figures for population and housing to establish the extent of housing land needs and to meet housing needs up to the year 2001.

IRA Prisoners

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements are currently in force for the police to be permitted to interview convicted Irish Republican Army prisoners in connection with incidents which have taken place *(a)* while they are in HM prison and *(b)* before they become inmates; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of these.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Where any convicted prisoner is suspected of involvement in any criminal offence either in or outside prison, rule 60 of the Prison Rules (NI) 1982 provides that

"a police officer may, on production of an order issued by or on behalf of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, interview any prisoner willing to see him."

The police and the prison authorities in Northern Ireland are satisfied that these arrangements are adequate.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Mates: None.

Students

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from Northern Ireland applied for places at university in Great Britain, and how many were accepted, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: Information provided by the Universities Central Council on Admissions is that in 1992, 8,121 students from Northern Ireland applied for places at university in Great Britain of whom 1,794 accepted the offer of a place.

Life Sentences

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table to show for as many years for which the information is conveniently available the number of persons sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of *(a)* police officers, *(b)* prison officers, *(c)* regular Army, *(d)* Ulster Defence Regiment members and *(e)* civilians who have been in each year released from prison; what was the average number of years and months served in each case; whether the life sentence had a minimum recommendation imposed by the court which was not served; and in which cases there was a terrorist involvement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The information is as follows:

	RUC	*NIPS*	*Army*	*UDR*	*Civilians*
1983	0	0	0	0	1
Average years served	—	—	—	—	12 years 1 month
Terrorist involvement	—	—	—	—	0
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	0
1984	0	0	0	0	2
Average years served	—	—	—	—	13 years 8 months
Terrorist involvement	—	—	—	—	2
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	1
1985	1	0	1	0	2
Average years served	9 years	—	7 years 5 months	—	11 years 1 month
Terrorist involvement	1	—	1	—	2
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	—
1986	1	0	0	0	3
Average years served	13 years 4 months	—	—	—	10 years 10 months
Terrorist involvement	1	—	—	—	2
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	—
1987	2	0	1	1	9
Average years served	14 years 1 month	—	10 years 3 months	14 years	12 years 8 months
Terrorist involvement	2	—	1	1	8
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	—
1988	5	0	1	0	14
Average years served	14 years 4 months	—	10 years 10 months	—	13 years
Terrorist involvement	5	—	1	—	12
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	3

	RUC	NIPS	Army	UDR	Civilians
1989	4	0	2	2	23
Average years served	14 years 10 months	—	15 years 10 months	15 years 7 months	14 years 5 months
Terrorist involvement	4	—	2	2	22
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	1
1990	5	0	4	5	41
Average years served	15 years 1 month	—	15 years 3 months	13 years 4 months	14 years 9 months
Terrorist involvement	5	—	4	5	38
Recommended minimum sentence not served	1	—	—	—	5
1991	4	0	2	1	15
Average years served	16 years 1 month	—	13 years 9 months	15 years 2 months	15 years 9 months
Terrorist involvement	4	—	2	1	14
Recommended minimum sentence not served	3	—	1	—	6
1992	3	1	3	4	32
Average years served	16 years 8 months	13 years 8 months	16 years 1 month	15 years 9 months	15 years 3 months
Terrorist involvement	3	1	3	4	32
Recommended minimum sentence not served	2	—	2	2	10
1993 (to 31 March)	0	0	0	0	12
Average years served	—	—	—	—	15 years 8 months
Terrorist involvement	—	—	—	—	12
Recommended minimum sentence not served	—	—	—	—	6
Totals	25	1	14	13	154
Released on licence	14 years 10 months	13 years 8 months	14 years 1 month	14 years 8 months	14 years 7 months
average years served	25	1	14	13	144
Terrorist involvement	6	0	3	2	32
Recommended minimum sentence not served					

Notes:
1. Table does not include prisoners who were released on licence early because they had given substantial assistance to the authorities.
2. Years served is calculated up to first release on licence.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of monitoring the religious affiliation of the employees of BBC Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I understand from the BBC that the estimated annual cost is £30,000.

EMPLOYMENT

Social Fund

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the implementation of objective 4 of the European Community social fund.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Assistance from the European social fund under objective 4 is aimed at improving the employment prospects of young people by supporting their vocational training. In 1992, £132 million was approved under objective 4 to support training for some 155,000 young people in the United Kingdom.

The regulations governing the EC structural funds are currently being reviewed.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications were made to industrial tribunals since the beginning of 1989 in which the grounds of the application was wholly or partly based on a claim that the applicant had been disadvantaged in, or dismissed from, his employment because of his trade union membership; and how many of these cases resulted in a decision in favour of the applicant.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures are as follows:

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Registered applications	513	709	475	411
Decision in favour of applicant	95	30	25	—

I regret that figures for the outcome of hearings are not yet available for 1992-93.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications have been made to industrial tribunals since the beginning of 1989; how many resulted in a hearing; and how many resulted in decisions in favour of the applicant.

Mr. McLoughlin: The figures are as follows:

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Registered applications	34,697	43,243	67,448	71,821
Hearings	10,229	11,430	13,773	—
Decision in favour of applicant	4,598	5,503	7,017	—

I regret that the figures for hearings and their outcome are not yet available for 1992-93.

The majority of applications to tribunals do not come to hearing, being settled or withdrawn, often after conciliation by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Giro Cheques

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she has taken to ensure that Giro cheques reported lost are replaced with the minimum of delay.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 16 April 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about replacing girocheques that are reported as lost. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I should explain that the policy of the Employment Service is to issue a prompt replacement whenever a girocheque is reported as not received, lost or destroyed unless there is reason to doubt the report is genuine.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Foreman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the outcome of the meeting on 6 April of the Social Affairs Council in Luxembourg; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I attended the meeting of the Labour and Social Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 6 April.

One proposal was agreed—a directive relating to the health and safety of workers exposed to biological agents at work. This directive, on the classification of biological agents, will amend the existing directive on the protection of workers from these risks.

A general debate was held on the employment situation in the Community in open session. This stemmed from the Social Affairs Council resolution on unemployment agreed during the United Kingdom presidency. In my remarks, I stressed the need for the Community to have full regard to its wider international competitiveness, and the importance of not damaging the prospects for jobs growth by increased regulation and higher costs.

Most of the rest of the agenda consisted of policy debates on outstanding proposals for directives, including those on European Works Councils and Protection of Young People at Work, on both of which the presidency had raised specific issues for discussion. There was also a brief discussion of outstanding issues on the Working Time Directive. No decisions were taken, but the presidency indicated that it hoped to bring these proposals back to the Council on 1 June.

Finally, there was a brief report from the presidency on the conference on the social dialogue, held in Copenhagen last month, and a progress report on negotiations on a directive on health and safety on fishing vessels.

TRANSPORT

Cyclists

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been conducted into the safety and protection from injury as provided by headgear for the users of bicycles.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Transport Research Laboratory report "Pedal Cycle Accidents—A Hospital Based Study" estimated that if helmets were universally worn more than 4,000 casualties would be prevented and the severity of 3,000 serious casualties would be reduced each year.

Data Protection Act 1984

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many certificates have been signed under the terms of section 27 of the Data Protection Act 1984 for each year since 1987.

Mr. Norris: I am aware of none so far as the Department of Transport is concerned.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the reduction in number of passengers travelling by air from London regional airports as a result of the channel tunnel rail link *(a)* when the tunnel opens and *(b)* when a high-speed rail link is completed.

Mr. Norris: The Department's 1991 air traffic forecasts project a reduction of 5·3 to 6·6 million passengers per annum travelling through London airports in 2000 as a result of the channel tunnel. These forecasts assume a high speed rail link. Estimates of the reduction in air passengers when the tunnel opens are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

MV Braer

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch into the grounding of the MV Braer on Shetland in January.

Mr. Norris: The Marine Accident Investigation Branch investigation is progressing well, but it is too early to give an indication of when the report of the chief inspector of marine accidents will be available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many formal or informal representations

have been received by him or his departmental Ministers and officials to the effect that a formal investigation under merchant shipping legislation should not be instituted in respect of the grounding of the MV Braer on Shetland in January.

Mr. Norris: None.

Transport Delays

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate has been made of the costs to businesses caused by transportation delays, on a yearly basis since 1969.

Mr. Norris: These costs are undoubtedly considerable, but no reliable estimate of them, by roads or by other modes, is available. It is an aim of the Department's expenditure and policies to reduce congestion and delay where it is economic to do so, and to make the best possible use of all modes of transport. By ensuring the maintenance of standards in British Rail's passengers charter and the London Underground charter we aim to ensure that public transport delays are kept to a minimum.

Security Alerts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information is held on the number of delays on British Rail and London Underground caused by security alerts, on a yearly basis since 1969.

Mr. Norris: British Rail and London Underground maintain records of such delays, though not back to 1969. It is not their policy to publish such information and thereby to give publicity to the activities of terrorists.

PRIME MINISTER

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if the costs of legal and other advisers attending the Scott inquiry will be covered by the resources made available by Her Majesty's Government to support Lord Justice Scott's investigation;

(2) what criteria will govern the repayment of costs for witnesses at the Scott inquiry; and what expenses will be regarded as reasonable.

The Prime Minister: The inquiry will meet the expenses of a witness or adviser necessarily incurred in attending to give evidence to the inquiry. Legal costs will be met by the inquiry if Lord Justice Scott decides that they were necessary in the interests of justice. They will be assessed by the costs branch of the Treasury Solicitor's Department on the standard basis (as defined in order 62, r.12(1) of the rules of the Supreme Court). The legal costs of Government witnesses or advisers will be met by the Department in which they were serving at the relevant time.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the minutes of the meeting held between the Cabinet Secretary and Lord Justice Scott on 12 February.

The Prime Minister: No. The Cabinet Secretary and Lord Justice Scott discussed the procedures which Lord Justice Scott will adopt during the course of his inquiry and that discussion was reflected in the notes of procedures published by Lord Justice Scott on 31 March 1993.

British Legion

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations he has received from the national chairman of the Royal British Legion; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 15 April 1993]:* A letter has been received expressing concerns over the recent introduction into war pensions legislation of a 20 per cent. disablement threshold for claims for noise-induced sensorineural hearing loss, and the new community care arrangements.

A reply has been sent which emphasises that the package on war pensions which included the change on hearing loss claims also included, gains of up to £5 a week for almost 200,000 war disablement pensioners. The Government consider that the concentration of limited resources on the most severely disabled war pensioners is the right way forward.

The reply explains that it is now for local authorities to make sure that they discharge their community care responsibilities effectively. Ministers in the Department of Health have encouraged organisations such as the Royal British Legion to seek discussions with the local authority associations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the use of the International Atomic Energy Agency's international centre for theoretical physics in Trieste by potential proliferator nations to obtain information which could contribute to the development of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The international centre for theoretical physics (ICTP) at Trieste is supported by the IAEA, UNESCO and the Government of Italy. It seeks to promote international co-operation among scientists from both industrialised and developing countries. A small proportion of its activity concerns the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We have no information that the centre has been used in the way suggested.

Middle East

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries he visited on his recent visit to the middle east; which Ministers or Government officials he met; and what matters in regard to nuclear non-proliferation and arms exports were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not been to the middle east since May last year, when he visited Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In Egypt he met President Mubarak, the Foreign Minister Mr. Amre Moussa, and the Secretary General of the Arab League

Dr. Abdel Meguid. In Kuwait he met the Amir, His Highness Shaikh Jabir al Sabah, the Crown Prince Shaikh Saad al Sabah, and the then Foreign Minister Shaikh Salem. In Saudi Arabia he met His Majesty King Fahd. He discussed a range of security issues, including the question of weapons of mass destruction and the United Kingdom contribution to the maintenance of peace in the Gulf.

Russia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had on nuclear proliferation and the forthcoming preparatory committee meeting for the fifth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty during his recent visit to Russia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed North Korea's announcement of her intention to withdraw from the non-proliferation treaty and the importance of upholding the treaty. There was no discussion about the first preparatory committee meeting of the 1995 extension review conference.

Sudan

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of the presence of Iranian troops, together with heavy military support equipment in southern Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The evidence is limited, but we shall continue to monitor the situation.

Forestry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on decisions taken during the 11th meeting of the FAO's Committee on Forestry in Rome during March;

(2) what action will be taken by the United Kingdom in accordance with decisions taken at the 11th meeting of the FAO's Committee on Forestry held in Rome during March.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 2 April 1993]* I have been asked to reply.

The biennial meetings of FAO's Committee on Forestry provide an opportunity for the exchange of views on important subjects related to forestry and for the provision of advice to FAO on its forestry activities. The Committee acts in an advisory capacity and does not take executive decisions.

At its 1993 meeting, the Committee reviewed and commented on FAO's regular programmes, criticised the reduction in FAO's forestry budget, and discussed the increasing political recognition of the importance of forestry, the implementation of the Forest Principles agreed in Rio de Janeiro, the role of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the future of the Tropical Forests Action Programme.

HEALTH

Nutrition (Children)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many reported cases there have been of malnutrition in children in the last five years;

(2) what steps she is taking to ensure that children are getting their recommended daily calorie intake.

Mr. Sackville: Malnutrition is a term which covers a wide variety of single or combined deficiencies of nutrients and/or energy, none of which are notifiable. Current surveillance does not indicate that, on average, children in the United Kingdom are malnourished in terms of any specific nutrient or energy.

Estimated average requirements for the daily calorie intakes appropriate for those aged 0 to 18 years in the United Kingdom are set out by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy in its report on Dietary Reference Values published in 1991. A copy is available in the Library.

Improved surveillance, through the Government-funded national study of health and growth and the national diet and nutrition survey programme, will provide more detailed information on children's health status in relation to energy and nutrient intake.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that all children and their parents are aware of what constitutes a healthy and balanced diet.

Mr. Sackville: Within the national curriculum, the science order for each key stage covers diet and nutrition in the context of personal health. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Health are contributing funds to the production of a comprehensive education pack "Food—A Fact Of Life" which the British Nutrition Foundation is producing for use in schools.

The Health Education Authority (HEA) provides information and advice on healthy eating to the public through its publications and local and national campaigns. In addition the Government have produced "Eight Guidelines for a Healthy Diet" as well as a range of booklets in the "Food Sense" series, copies of which are available in the Library.

The nutrition task force set up under "The Health of the Nation" as a partnership between Government and key outside organisations is currently considering action to improve and target advice on healthy eating and weight control for all population groups.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that children who have parents on a low income have access to a healthy and balanced diet; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: A healthy and balanced diet can be achieved in a variety of ways and need not be more expensive than the current average diet. Children whose parents are in receipt of income support are entitled to free school meals and the welfare food scheme continues to provide a nutritional safeguard for children in low-income families.

Elderly People

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation she has made of the effect of the European Year of the Elderly in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo: It is too early to evaluate the effect of the year, which commenced in January, but I am confident that it will bring real and lasting benefits to older people.

Orthopaedic Operations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of orthopaedic hand operations carried out in the last 14 years have required revision;

(2) what percentage of knee replacement operations carried out in the last 14 years have required revision.

Mr. Sackville: It is not possible to identify precisely what proportion of operations required revision, but in 1989-90 and 1990-91 respectively, an estimated 6·3 per cent. and 5·3 per cent. of knee joint replacements were revisions. Equivalent information for hand operations is not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a national register of knee replacements and revisions to provide an accurate measure of revision rate.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 14 April at column *610*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which knee replacement implants which have been used in the NHS in the last 14 years have *(a)* the highest success rate and *(b)* the highest failure rate.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the outcome of knee replacement operations is not available centrally. It is the responsibility of clinicians to give advice to patients on the various types of knee implants available, based on the needs of the patient.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what tests are carried out on knee replacement implants before they can be marketed.

Mr. Sackville: There are no statutory requirements for the marketing of knee replacement implants.

Since 1986, knee implants have been controlled by the voluntary Department of Health manufacturer registration scheme, which requires that new designs should undergo appropriate testing prior to their release for general sale. There are currently 23 registered manufacturers of knee implants and the vast majority of these products implanted in the United Kingdom are from registered sources.

From 1 January 1995, the European Directive on Medical Devices will place the control of knee implants on a formal statutory basis, and manufacturers will be required to submit details of manufacturing and design to third party assessment.

Consultation Procedures

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the process of consultation that will apply to the proposed changes to health services by local health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities (DHAs) are required by the Community Health Council (CHC) Regulations 1985 (SI No. 304), as amended, to consult the relevant CHC on proposals they are considering which would result in substantial changes to the services in the district.

Information about the proposed changes should be provided to the relevant CHC and other interested parties, and a date prescribed by which comments should be made. The DHA will then reconsider the proposal in the light of the comments and, if there is no objection from the CHC, may proceed with implementation.

Ministers make decisions on contested closure proposals. Where a CHC wishes to object formally to a proposal, involving the closure or change of use of a health building, the DHA refers it to the regional health authority (RHA). If the RHA supports the DHA's proposal, it will refer the proposal to the Secretary of State for final decision.

Health Districts (Budgets)

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the 10 health districts in England which had the lowest revenue budgets per head of the population in the most recent available five-year period.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 30 March 1993]:* The information requested for a five-year period could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

The budgets of district health authorities are set by regional health authorities and detailed information is not collected centrally. However, lists derived from information which relates the expenditure of district health authorities to their resident populations for the years 1989-90 to 1991-92 are shown in the table.

The district health authority figures for 1991-92 are not comparable with those for earlier years as they show the authorities primarily as purchasers rather than providers of health care. Figures of expenditure per head of population for district health authorities will inevitably vary. Those for years prior to 1991-92 will reflect patterns of local service provision and the effects of patient flows across health authority boundaries while the figures for 1991-92 should be regarded as transitional as each regional health authority moves towards allocating funds to district health authorities on a weighted capitation basis. Figures for spending per capita include other resources (such as regional budgets and local income) in addition to allocations for resident populations.

Revenue expenditure per head of population—lowest annual figures for district health authorities in England

	£
1989-90	
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	168
Sandwell	167
North Tyneside	166
Durham	162
South West Hertfordshire	160
Northallerton	158
Wycombe	157
Halton	153
East Hertfordshire	150
Chorley and South Ribble	96
1990-91	
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	182
North Tyneside	181
Trafford	181

	£
South West Hertfordshire	174
Durham	173
Northallerton	172
Wycombe	172
Halton	163
East Hertfordshire	162
Chorley and South Ribble	103
1991-92	
North Derbyshire	286
Kettering	281
Southend	279
South East Staffordshire	277
Chorley and South Ribble	276
Medway	276
Wycombe	276
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	268
Huntingdon	264
Durham	209

Sources:

Annual accounts of district health authorities in England 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mid-year estimates of resident population—1989 to 1991 (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys).

Notes to the table:

1. The figures for the DHAs are based upon their total revenue expenditure on the services which they managed or accounted for in the relevant financial years. Those for 1991-92 cover their total revenue expenditure including that on purchases of health care and directly related services, administrative and purchasing functions and other expenditure.

2. Capital expenditure incurred by the DHAs and all expenditure incurred by regional health authorities is excluded. Expenditure on family health services, which is accounted for by family health services authorities and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts, is similarly excluded.

3. The population figures used make no allowance for residents of particular districts who receive treatment in others. The figures used for mid-1991 are provisional and based on the 1991 census.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new lettings were made by housing associations in Wales for each year since 1979; and what proportion of new lettings were made to tenants receiving housing benefit.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available centrally.

SCOTLAND

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women have in vitro fertilisation treatment each year; how many are undertaken by the national health service; and how many in the private sector.

Mr. Stewart: Prior to August 1991 and the advent of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), data was collected on the number of treatment cycles rather than the number of women treated. If did not differentiate between the NHS and the private sector. Figures are as follows:

Year	Number
1989	456
1990	570
1991	390

The 1991 figures are for January to July only. Data about the number of women given IVF treatment from August to December 1991 will be available in July this year. The HFEA will not be able to give information about the number of women treated by the NHS because of the complexity of funding arrangements.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Debt

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give in cash terms the level of the national debt at the end of each financial year since 1979, together with his forecasts for its level at the end of each year until 1997-98 using the public sector borrowing requirement forecasts published with his Budget.

Mr. Lamont: The table shows data for net public sector debt at end-March for each year from 1979 to 1992, plus projections for 1993 and 1994 consistent with the Budget forecast.

Net public sector debt (end-March figures)

	£ billion	Percentage GDP
1979	92·0	49·50
1980	100·6	45·50
1981	115·2	47·00
1982	126·1	47·00
1983	134·0	45·75
1984	146·5	46·50
1985	160·3	46·75
1986	166·4	44·75
1987	172·3	42·50
1988	177·1	38·00
1989	157·2	31·50
1990	151·0	28·00
1991	153·9	27·25
1992	167·9	28·25
1993	204·0	33·50
1994	255·0	39·25

Projections for 1994-95 to 1997-98 for net public sector debt as a percent of GDP are shown in chart 2.5 of the 1993-94 Financial Statement and Budget Report. The projections are illustrative and depend on the assumptions made about the growth of the economy.

Oil Taxation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment the Treasury made of the possible jobs impact of the Budget oil taxation changes; if he will publish details of the impact assessment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Budget tax proposals increase the post-tax costs and increase the post-tax profits that would have been subject to PRT. The effect on jobs depends on the extent to which companies would have been deterred from worthwhile investment by the current levels of taxation, or have planned more exploration and appraisal activity than is economically justified.

The Government expect little net effect on employment levels as a result of the proposed PRT changes.

Arrears Payments

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance he, or the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue, have issued in the past 12 months changing the instructions on restricting the acceptance of payment of arrears by instalments.

Mr. Dorrell: There has been no change to the instructions issued regarding the acceptance of payment of arrears of tax by instalments. The Inland Revenue recognises that people may face temporary financial difficulties and in such circumstances the collector should be contacted at the earliest opportunity to discuss how the difficulty may be resolved. All reasonable offers of payment, including payment by instalments, are considered. There are no plans to change this practice.

Consumer Statistics

Ms Abbott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information is collated on consumption by *(a)* low income families, *(b)* middle income families and *(c)* high income families over the last 12 months for (i) food, drink and tobacco, (ii) furniture and house maintenance, (iii) fuel, electricity and gas, etc., (iv) clothing and (v) entertainment.

Mr. Nelson: Information on expenditure by households on all items, including categories (i) to (v), was obtained in the last 12 months through the Family Expenditure Survey. Analyses of expenditure by level of household income will be included in the report "Family Spending", to be published in the autumn. A copy of the latest report, for 1991, is available in the Library.

Small Businesses

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how long he gave the Bank of England to prepare the report on bank charges to small businesses which he reported to the House on 20 January, *Official Report*, columns *623-25*.

Mr. Nelson: The bank was asked on 16 November to undertake the study. Its final report, which was based on a number of exchanges with the commercial banks and the information provided by them, was published on 26 January. The period from initial request to final publication was 71 days.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *623-25*, how many small business customers were interviewed in the instance on which he has based his statement.

Mr. Nelson: The answer of 26 January concerned a report produced by the Bank of England based on information which it had gathered from the banks. Although my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had commissioned the report because of the number of complaints which the Government had received from small business customers, none was interviewed as part of that study. However, as the answer made clear, the bank's conclusions were supported by another report commissioned from Nottingham university and published, a few weeks earlier, by the Forum of Private Business. The Nottingham university study had been based on information provided by small business customers.

Oil Taxation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment the Treasury has made of the possible impact on exploration and appraisal activity in the United Kingdom continental shelf of the Budget oil taxation changes; and if he will express the impact in terms of numbers of drilling wells in each of the next five years.

Mr. Dorrell: Exploration and appraisal activity has proved highly volatile and difficult to forecast, irrespective of tax changes. The Government do not publish five-year forecasts of this or other components of North sea activity.

The increasing use of 3D seismic surveys means that the level of drilling activity is becoming a less effective measure of total exploration and appraisal activity. One of the aims of the Budget proposals is to encourage companies to improve their international competitiveness by giving them greater rewards for innovation and for more effective working methods.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish details of the Treasury's impact assessment of the Budget oil taxation changes on the forecast number of exploration and appraisal drilling wells, in the United Kingdom continental shelf, in each of the next five years; and if he will make a comparison with those forecasts made prior to the Budget changes.

Mr. Dorrell: The Budget proposals shift the emphasis away from adding to oil and gas discoveries and towards developing existing finds. That is likely to influence how companies allocate their funds between exploration, appraisal, development and enhanced recovery.

The Budget tax changes are one, and only one, factor affecting future exploration and appraisal levels. A significant number of wells are drilled by companies which do not expect to get early PRT relief for the expenditure. There is no reason to suppose such activity would be affected. To the extent that companies with discoveries made more attractive by PRT abolition wanted to get them into production earlier, there should be some increased appraisal activity. However, to the extent that companies have planned their E and A programmes essentially to obtain PRT tax relief at 75 per cent. rather than on pre-tax economics, some decline in future E and A activity is to be expected.

Immigration and Nationality Department

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances the Inland Revenue passes information on individual cases to the Immigration and Nationality Department of the Home Department without the express consent of the individual.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue does not disclose to other Government Departments any information it holds on taxpayers without their consent except as authorised by statute. There is no legislation which requires the Inland Revenue to pass such information to the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to receive the report by the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board on the board's regulatory responsibilities.

Mr. Nelson: Pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) on 3 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *121*, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer now expects to receive the report in the next few weeks.

VAT

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total capital income from value added tax at 8 per cent. and 17½ per cent. from *(a)* gas and *(b)* electricity bills in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Estimates of total revenue from VAT on fuel on power at 8 per cent., and 17½ per cent. were given in the Budget speech. No estimate was made for the separate revenue from gas bills and electricity bills.

Intra-Community Trade

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the intra-Community trade declared despatch arrival values for January to February 1993 as a percentage of the corresponding values for January to February 1992 period.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Details of the value of intra-Community arrivals into and despatches from the United Kingdom in January and February 1993 are not yet available. As such, the requested figures cannot be calculated at this time.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wild Birds (Transport)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 22 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *271*, what further progress has been made in persuading European Community partners to introduce special safeguards on the transport of live wild birds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Commission has established a working group of experts to consider what additional measures should be adopted under the directive on the protection of animals during transport. Amongst the subjects being addressed is the trade in wild-caught birds. We have urged the Commission to bring forward its proposals quickly.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the criteria used by the Home Office to select outside tenderers for Home Office tasks which are the subject of market testing exercises.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Evaluation criteria will be contained, where appropriate, in the EC *Journal* notice advertising the relevant market tests, or in the invitation to tender documents.

Prisoner Escort Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated current cost of court escorts; and how much might be saved if the function was contracted out in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 1 April 1993:

COURT ESCORT AND CUSTODY WORK

The Home Secretary has asked me to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the costs of court escort and custody work.

Court escort and custody work has been the responsibility of individual prison establishments and police forces: information on costs is not centrally collected but a study in 1991 estimated the costs then at £92m. A number of studies have indicated that the provision of a contracted out, unitary service dedicated to court escort and custody work would reduce costs although the estimates of percentage savings have varied from study to study. Detailed costing work is undertaken as each area of the country is considered for contracting out.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate has been made of the costs to the Exchequer of bomb damage, terrorist violence or threat of violence in *(a)* London, *(b)* the rest of Great Britain and *(c)* Northern Ireland, in terms of compensation paid to victims for (i) personal injury, (ii) loss of business and (iii) damage to property, on a yearly basis since 1969.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which is responsible for administering the criminal injuries compensation scheme in Great Britain, does not record centrally information about claims for personal injury arising from terrorist incidents as distinct from other forms of crime. Such information could not be provided without disproportionate cost. Compensation is not paid for loss of business or damage to property arising from terrorist incidents in Great Britain. Compensation matters in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Compensation Agency.

Mr. Don Treshman

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on how Mr. Don Treshman was able to enter the United Kingdom on Sunday 28 March after an exclusion order had been made on Friday 26 March.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend decided during the evening of Friday 26 March that Mr. Treshman should be excluded from the United Kingdom on the ground that his presence was not conducive to the

public good. The asylum and special cases division communicated the decision to the ports directorate at 10.30 am on Saturday 27 March, the expectation being that Mr. Treshman would arrive at Heathrow on 28 March. In the event, Mr. Treshman arrived at Gatwick South at 10.45 on Saturday 27 March before his details had been circulated to all ports. The failure to notify the ports of the decision on Friday evening was regrettable and arrangements have been put in place to ensure that in future there is no delay in communicating details of exclusion decisions to ports of entry.

Protection of Animals Act

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will introduce legislation to provide a minimum banning order of five years for those convicted under the Protection of Animals Act 1911;

(2) if he will conduct a study of the range of times for which banning orders have been applied by the courts under the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Minimum sentences are not in general a feature of the criminal justice system in this country. It is for the courts, subject to the maximum penalty prescribed by Parliament and in the light of all the relevant factors, to decide upon the appropriate penalty in an individual case.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to initiate a study of the courts' use of their power under the 1911 Act to disqualify an offender from having custody of an animal.

Shotgun Certificates

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table to show for those constabularies in England and Wales which keep such records the number of persons holding shotgun certificates who are presently 12 years, 13 years, 14 years, 15 years, 16 years, 17 years and 18 years respectively, or such age or ages definition as is convenient, or is used by police; and what were the numbers three and five years ago for each police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information which is readily available is given in the table. This shows the number of shotgun certificates which were on issue to persons aged under 16 in six police force areas in England and Wales on 1 December 1992.

Information about other police force areas and previous years is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Shotgun certificates

Police force	*Number of shotgun certificates on issue to persons aged under 16 (see note)*
Metropolitan	46
Devon and Cornwall	80
Gwent	9
Thames Valley	59
West Yorkshire	30
Avon and Somerset	89
Total (six forces)	313

Note: Certificates on issue as at 1 December 1992 to persons aged under 16 on that day.

Racism

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government are taking to combat racism.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are committed to eliminating racism and reducing racial disadvantage. The Race Relations Act 1976 and Public Order Act 1986 provide statutory protection for ethnic minorities and are kept under review. In 1992 the inter-departmental racial attacks group published a second report on initiatives which tackled the problem of racially motivated violence and the response by police and local agencies. We are also taking steps both in European and in international forums to promote the value of anti-discrimination legislation and of non-legislative measures to increase racial harmony.

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the Home Office scoping reports thus far completed in respect of the market testing of any Home Office function.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Scoping study reports are internal management documents made available to local management and, where practicable, to trade unions.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase funds to London boroughs to deal with refugees and asylum seekers; and what plans he has to implement a strategic approach in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department of the Environment is providing special financial assistance to local authorities worst affected by the influx of displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia in 1992-93. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 3 February at col. 343 that a similar scheme will operate in 1993-94 and that assistance will also be given in respect of unaccompanied refugee children. Local authorities, including London boroughs, will be given an opportunity to make claims for financial assistance in due course.

We are conscious of the pressure on services due to the number of refugees and asylum seekers wishing to settle in London. Where refugees are being brought to the United Kingdom under Government-sponsored schemes, every effort is made to settle these people outside London.

Prison Education Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the private firms involved in tendering for the prison education service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 14 January at col. 798. Responsibility for this matter has now been delegated to the director general of the prison service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Harry Greenway, dated 16 April 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about firms tendering for the Prison Education Service.

Mr. Lloyd announced on 11 February the award of the contracts for 68 prisons and young offender institutions. A list of those to whom contracts have been awarded is enclosed. Contracts for 57 prison establishments have still to be awarded.

Education Contracts Already Offered

(A) Prison establishments where the contract offered is to be let from 1 April 1993 because there is no agreement to continue the existing arrangements

Prison/Young offender institution	*Preferred tenderer*
Bristol	University of Bristol
Bullwood Hall	Essex County Council Community Education
Chelmsford	
Finnamore Wood	Amersham and Wycombe College
Huntercombe	
Littlehey	
Holme House	Stockton and Billingham College
Lancaster Farms	Lancaster and Morecambe College
Lincoln	Mill Wharf Education Services
Onley	Northampton College
Wellingborough	
Risley	South Manchester College
Styal	
Thorn Cross	
Whitemoor	Norwich City College
Woodhill	Milton Keynes College

(B) Proposed awards of contracts from 1 September 1993

This lists the other prison establishments that will be offered to tenderers listed in table A where the existing provider has agreed to provide education services on current terms until 31 August. The starting date is subject to the outcome of the judicial review.

Prison/Young offender institution	*Existing provider*	*Preferred tenderer*
Aylesbury	Aylesbury College	Amersham and Wycombe College
Bedford	Bedford College	
The Mount	West Herts College	
Hindley	Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council/ Wigan and Leigh College	South Manchester College
Liverpool	Liverpool City Council/ Liverpool Community College	
Blundeston	Suffolk County Council	Norwich City College
Highpoint	Suffolk County Council/ West Suffolk College	
Hollesley Bay	Suffolk County Council	
Norwich	Norwich City College	
Wayland	Norwich City College	
Cardiff	South Glamorgan County Council	University of Bristol
Dorchester	Dorset County Council/ Weymouth College	
Exeter	Devon County Council	
Reading	Berkshire County Council/ Reading Adult College	
Swansea	Swansea College	
Ashwell	Leicestershire County Council/ Charles Keen College	Mill Wharf Education Services
Gartree	Leicestershire County Council/ Leicester South Fields College	
Glen Parva	Leicestershire County Council/ Charles Keen College	
Leicester	Leicestershire County Council/ Leicester South Fields College	
Morton Hall	Lincolnshire County Council/ Grantham College	
Stocken	Leicestershire County Council/ Leicester South Fields College	

(C) Proposed awards from 1 September 1993, or earlier, to existing providers

In all these establishments providers have agreed to supply education services on current terms until 31 August. The contracts may start earlier if the Prison Service and the provider agree.

Prison/Young offender institution	*Preferred tenderer*
Albany	Isle of Wight College of Arts and Technology
Camp Hill	
Parkhurst	
Bullingdon	North Oxfordshire College
Durham	New College, Durham
Frankland	
Low Newton	
Erlestoke	Trowbridge College
Ford	Northbrook College
Full Sutton	Beverley College
Garth	Runshaw College
Wymott	

Prison/Young offender institution	*Preferred tenderer*
Grendon Spring Hill	Aylesbury College
Guys Marsh Portland The Verne	Weymouth College
Haslar	Fareham College
Hatfield Lindholme Moorland	Doncaster College
Hull	Humberside County Council
Kirkham	Blackpool and the Fylde College
New Hall Wakefield	Wakefield College
North Sea Camp	Boston College
Swinfen Hall	Tamworth College
Sudbury Foston Hall	Derby Tertiary College
Rudgate Thorp Arch Wetherby	Airedale and Wharfedale College

(D) Establishments where no decision has been taken and where the existing providers have agreed to continue to provide services on current terms until August 1993.
Decisions will be made after the outcome of the judicial review.

Prison/Young offender institution	*Existing provider*
Acklington	Northumberland County Council
Aldington	Kent County Council South Kent College
Askham Grange	North Yorkshire County Council York College
Belmarsh	London Borough of Greenwich
Birmingham	Birmingham City Council Birmingham Metropolitan Institute of Technology
Blantyre House	Kent County Council Mid Kent College
Brinsford	Cannock Chase Technical College
Brixton	London Borough of Lambeth
Brockhill	North East Worcestershire College
Canterbury	Kent County Council Canterbury College
Castington	Northumberland County Council
Channings Wood	Devon County Council
Coldingley	Surrey County Council
Cookham Wood	Kent County Council Mid Kent College
Dartmoor	Devon County Council
Deerbolt	Durham County Council Bishop Auckland Technical College
Dover	Kent County Council South Kent College
Downview	Surrey County Council
Drake Hall	Stoke on Trent College
East Sutton Park	Kent County Council Mid Kent College
Elmley	Kent County Council Mid Kent College
Everthorpe	Humberside County Council Hull College of Further Education
Featherstone	Cannock Chase Technical College
Feltharn	London Borough of Hounslow Hounslow Borough College
Gloucester	Gloucestershire County Council Gloucester College of Arts and Technology
Haverigg	Cumbria County Council Furness College
Hewell Grange	North East Worcestershire College
Highdown	Surrey County Council
Holloway	Islington Federal College
Kingston	Highbury College of Technology
Kirklevington	Longlands College
Lancaster	Lancashire County Council The Adult College, Lancaster
Latchmere House	Surrey County Council
Leeds	Park Lane College
Lewes	University of Brighton
Leyhill	Filton College
Long Lartin	Evesham College
Maidstone	Kent County Council Mid Kent College
Northallerton	North Yorkshire County Council
Nottingham	Nottinghamshire County Council
Pentonville	Islington Federal College
Preston	Lancashire County Council Preston College
Pucklechurch	Soundwell College
Ranby	Nottinghamshire County Council
Rochester	Kent County Council/Mid Kent College
Send	Surrey County Council
Shepton Mallet	Strode College
Shrewsbury	Shropshire County Council
Stafford	Stafford College
Standford Hill	Kent County Council/Mid Kent College
Stoke Heath	Shropshire County Council
Swaleside	Kent County Council/Mid Kent College
Usk/Prescoed	Gwent Tertiary College
Wandsworth	South Thames College
Werrington	Stoke on Trent College
Whatton	Nottinghamshire County Council
Winchester	Eastleigh College
Wormwood Scrubs	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Crime Statistics

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by English police authority *(a)* the population covered by that authority, *(b)* the authorised police establishment for that authority, *(c)* the actual police establishment for that authority, *(d)* the total arrests made in that authority, *(e)* the number of arrests made per actual police officer, *(f)* the total number of reported crimes, *(g)* the number of crimes per officer, *(h)* the total number of crimes per thousand population and *(i)* the total number of reported crimes unsolved per thousand population for the last 10 years for which figures are available and for 1978-79.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 15 April 1993]:* The information for items *(a)* to *(c)* can be found in the appendix to the annual report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary and information for items *(f)* and *(h)* are published annually in chapter 2 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales"; copies of these publications are available in the Library. The other information requested is given in the tables, with the exception of item *(i)* which is available only at disproportionate cost.

Arrests for all types of offences

Police force area	[1]1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	13,777	29,474	32,054	35,891	38,350	37,930	39,796	40,687	34,190	36,290	37,592	39,852	42,421	39,216
Bedfordshire	6,559	14,539	15,629	15,831	16,679	16,068	16,699	17,147	14,232	15,694	15,864	14,886	17,705	17,543
Cambridgeshire	7,523	14,947	17,483	17,757	16,544	16,303	15,702	16,187	15,552	17,239	16,388	16,466	18,389	17,699
Cheshire	8,544	17,422	17,610	18,511	19,526	19,730	19,824	21,265	21,207	23,310	24,068	25,103	27,823	29,684
Cleveland	9,819	22,679	21,411	24,565	24,181	27,560	25,982	27,049	24,226	24,670	24,351	25,527	26,584	28,061
Cumbria	5,222	10,693	12,230	12,434	13,612	13,379	14,430	15,959	14,446	14,591	16,346	18,244	19,479	21,275
Derbyshire	6,925	16,363	18,039	17,850	19,253	20,167	22,120	21,687	19,044	20,126	20,751	22,781	23,079	23,708
Devon and Cornwall	9,187	19,414	20,933	21,499	23,336	25,819	26,679	28,999	25,342	27,704	28,717	30,786	31,404	34,024
Dorset	5,276	10,836	11,990	13,068	14,197	14,356	13,332	13,554	12,880	13,478	13,981	16,048	17,487	18,382
Durham	6,930	13,586	15,224	16,616	18,427	18,274	19,712	18,943	18,286	21,762	23,303	25,415	25,965	25,125
Essex	13,249	26,541	30,279	31,138	33,792	34,805	37,965	38,184	32,398	35,140	35,607	37,913	39,990	40,100
Gloucestershire	4,225	9,716	10,242	11,758	12,559	12,438	12,078	12,814	11,557	12,428	12,787	14,409	17,043	17,020
Greater Manchester	39,333	88,309	92,407	102,118	110,537	107,746	110,213	116,647	101,804	109,963	110,307	115,248	116,678	116,916
Hampshire	18,951	40,895	42,015	42,551	45,063	44,325	44,022	50,194	49,796	52,052	54,419	61,063	63,171	62,330
Hertfordshire	6,733	16,127	17,743	19,092	19,463	20,129	18,963	18,487	16,405	20,538	20,114	22,868	22,648	23,191
Humberside	13,664	27,186	28,174	30,662	34,081	35,095	33,480	35,997	34,807	35,106	32,981	35,568	36,066	35,847
Kent	15,828	33,682	35,484	37,003	39,173	38,491	38,236	41,520	41,428	46,808	47,806	47,253	47,007	47,992
Lancashire	16,090	33,859	39,459	39,844	39,983	45,261	49,848	48,666	46,197	47,881	51,053	53,129	57,235	62,104
Leicestershire	9,787	19,822	20,472	21,202	21,293	20,660	19,952	22,159	20,262	20,945	22,181	24,604	24,949	26,417
Lincolnshire	5,426	11,460	12,359	13,203	13,938	14,747	11,987	13,010	13,797	17,282	16,550	18,089	21,474	22,680
London, City of	1,761	3,516	3,276	3,390	3,577	3,582	3,596	3,511	3,558	3,702	4,248	4,489	4,809	4,688
Merseyside	28,349	59,361	60,372	57,139	57,165	60,452	60,554	59,216	51,487	54,088	56,914	62,559	69,207	72,930
Metropolitan Police[2]	154,622	330,419	349,993	340,809	362,137	364,703	349,941	109,786	103,084	109,587	108,706	111,420	116,865	113,586
Norfolk	3,738	8,103	9,347	10,155	13,951	16,010	16,292	16,448	14,812	17,232	17,765	19,131	22,727	20,898
Northamptonshire	6,468	12,865	13,929	15,151	15,505	15,407	15,868	14,572	13,382	14,193	16,088	16,993	18,242	19,353
Northumbria	27,280	59,068	61,635	62,121	61,180	56,764	53,704	57,203	54,999	60,206	59,302	62,415	65,694	68,847
North Yorkshire	5,426	10,025	11,583	11,829	12,370	12,532	13,780	14,308	14,216	16,656	17,541	17,531	20,221	20,936
Nottinghamshire	13,245	27,658	29,701	32,625	33,532	34,106	29,835	35,485	35,970	37,423	38,481	42,679	45,468	46,487
South Yorkshire	17,288	38,545	40,430	44,550	46,653	46,097	48,903	49,681	32,791	35,859	37,731	39,914	43,979	45,722
Staffordshire	11,669	23,983	26,700	31,833	33,719	34,782	38,118	36,405	31,831	34,585	32,351	36,481	36,861	39,142
Suffolk	5,244	11,518	12,176	12,452	12,509	12,434	13,134	13,778	10,450	12,010	12,574	13,053	13,905	15,796
Surrey	7,733	16,687	17,730	17,536	18,255	19,357	18,622	17,101	16,569	18,582	18,495	19,468	20,920	19,940
Sussex	15,285	32,060	33,955	35,294	36,492	35,817	34,174	33,348	29,872	32,448	31,329	35,574	37,358	39,247
Thames Valley	17,291	37,304	39,314	42,076	46,950	49,254	48,136	51,817	47,686	48,199	50,225	57,246	59,098	59,458
Warwickshire	2,788	5,405	6,203	7,050	8,846	8,671	8,667	9,379	10,112	10,625	10,998	12,812	13,161	14,138
West Mercia	9,675	19,934	21,973	22,692	24,104	24,522	25,525	26,123	25,004	25,027	26,114	28,590	32,285	32,048
West Midlands	35,177	73,368	83,631	87,376	91,158	91,933	90,816	97,329	86,602	93,562	104,116	119,069	123,868	131,062
West Yorkshire	25,131	52,699	56,942	56,702	59,504	58,277	55,609	60,577	67,103	70,640	70,093	78,215	84,172	85,867
Wiltshire	3,191	7,026	8,222	8,857	9,029	9,388	10,759	10,876	8,586	9,846	11,187	13,195	14,507	13,670

[1] Figures for July to December only.
[2] Arrest figures for notifiable offences only from 1985 onwards.

Arrests per police officer

Police force area	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Avon and Somerset	n/a	10	11	12	13	12	13	13	11	12	12	13	14	12
Bedfordshire	n/a	15	16	16	17	16	17	17	14	15	15	14	16	16
Cambridgeshire	n/a	14	16	16	14	14	14	14	13	15	14	14	15	14
Cheshire	n/a	10	9	10	11	11	11	12	12	12	13	13	14	16
Cleveland	n/a	16	14	16	16	19	17	18	16	16	16	17	18	19
Cumbria	n/a	10	11	11	12	12	13	14	13	12	14	15	16	18
Derbyshire	n/a	9	10	10	11	11	12	12	11	11	11	12	13	14
Devon and Cornwall	n/a	7	8	8	8	9	10	10	9	10	10	11	11	12
Dorset	n/a	9	10	11	12	12	11	11	11	11	11	12	13	14
Durham	n/a	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	14	16	17	18	19	18
Essex	n/a	10	11	12	13	13	14	14	12	13	13	13	14	14
Gloucestershire	n/a	9	9	10	11	11	10	11	10	10	11	12	14	14
Greater Manchester	n/a	13	13	15	16	15	16	17	15	15	16	16	16	16
Hampshire	n/a	14	14	14	14	14	14	16	16	16	17	19	20	19
Hertfordshire	n/a	11	12	12	12	13	12	11	10	13	12	14	13	14
Humberside	n/a	14	14	15	17	18	17	18	17	18	16	18	18	18
Kent	n/a	12	12	13	13	13	13	14	14	16	16	16	15	15
Lancashire	n/a	11	12	12	12	14	16	16	15	15	16	16	18	19
Leicestershire	n/a	12	12	12	12	12	12	13	12	12	12	14	14	14
Lincolnshire	n/a	10	10	11	12	12	10	11	12	14	14	15	17	19
London, City of	n/a	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	6
Merseyside	n/a	13	13	12	12	13	13	13	11	11	12	13	15	16
Metropolitan Police	n/a	15	15	14	14	14	14	13	4	4	4	4	4	4
Norfolk	n/a	6	7	8	11	12	13	13	11	13	13	14	16	15
Northamptonshire	n/a	14	14	15	15	15	16	14	13	13	14	15	16	16
Northumbria	n/a	17	18	18	18	17	16	17	16	17	17	17	18	20
North Yorkshire	n/a	7	8	9	9	9	10	10	10	12	13	12	14	15
Nottinghamshire	n/a	13	13	14	15	15	13	16	16	16	17	18	19	20
South Yorkshire	n/a	14	14	15	16	16	17	17	11	12	13	13	15	15
Staffordshire	n/a	12	13	15	16	16	18	17	15	16	15	17	17	18
Suffolk	n/a	10	11	11	11	11	11	12	9	10	10	11	11	13
Surrey	n/a	11	11	11	11	12	11	10	10	11	11	12	12	12
Sussex	n/a	11	12	12	13	13	12	12	11	11	11	12	12	13
Thames Valley	n/a	13	13	13	15	15	14	16	14	14	14	15	16	16
Warwickshire	n/a	6	7	7	9	9	9	10	10	11	11	13	13	14
West Mercia	n/a	11	11	12	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	14	16	16
West Midlands	n/a	12	13	13	13	14	14	15	13	14	15	17	18	19
West Yorkshire	n/a	11	11	11	11	11	11	12	13	13	13	15	16	16
Wiltshire	n/a	7	8	8	9	9	10	10	8	9	10	11	12	11

[1] Arrest figures for notification offences only from 1985 onwards.
n/a = Not available.

Recorded crimes per police officer[1]

Police force area	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Avon and Somerset	19	17	18	20	22	22	24	26	30	32	31	31	40	48
Bedfordshire	27	28	27	29	30	31	34	34	38	39	37	38	48	51
Cambridgeshire	27	21	26	28	26	26	26	27	27	28	28	30	36	45
Cheshire	15	15	17	19	21	22	23	23	24	26	24	23	27	32
Cleveland	25	23	23	26	29	28	32	32	36	38	37	38	47	49
Cumbria	18	17	15	16	18	19	21	22	25	23	22	23	26	35
Derbyshire	23	20	19	23	25	24	26	25	24	24	22	25	32	41
Devon and Cornwall	16	15	17	19	20	21	22	23	25	25	25	26	31	37
Dorset	22	18	20	21	24	25	26	27	29	30	28	30	36	39
Durham	19	18	20	22	25	26	30	30	30	30	29	30	36	43
Essex	21	20	20	21	23	23	23	24	26	26	25	26	32	36
Gloucestershire	15	14	16	18	20	19	21	23	24	28	28	29	35	46
Greater Manchester	24	24	26	30	32	33	37	39	43	41	39	38	44	50
Hampshire	21	21	20	23	25	25	27	28	30	30	28	30	36	43
Hertfordshire	24	24	21	22	24	22	24	24	26	25	24	24	27	32
Humberside	23	23	17	27	30	29	32	36	39	43	41	43	50	57
Kent	19	18	17	18	21	21	23	24	24	25	25	26	32	43
Lancashire	16	16	16	18	20	20	22	22	24	25	26	24	29	33
Leicestershire	17	17	19	21	24	24	25	26	27	28	28	30	40	48
Lincolnshire	14	14	15	17	20	20	22	25	25	28	26	28	31	36
London, City of	7	8	7	7	8	8	8	8	10	9	8	9	9	9
Merseyside	24	23	24	27	29	29	32	32	35	33	29	27	27	31
Metropolitan Police	24	23	23	24	25	24	26	26	28	26	25	26	29	31
Norfolk	18	17	19	23	26	26	26	28	30	30	30	32	38	44
Northamptonshire	24	23	24	25	29	29	31	34	35	36	33	34	41	49
Northumbria	28	28	30	33	38	38	43	45	46	47	43	48	53	59
North Yorkshire	16	15	15	18	20	20	22	25	25	25	24	24	32	35
Nottinghamshire	32	32	33	37	37	36	38	38	40	40	39	43	54	61
South Yorkshire	21	20	20	22	25	26	30	28	30	31	28	30	34	39
Staffordshire	17	17	17	19	20	22	23	24	26	25	25	26	32	38
Suffolk	17	17	16	18	19	20	21	23	25	25	24	26	30	32
Surrey	17	17	14	15	17	17	17	17	19	19	19	20	25	29
Sussex	16	16	16	17	20	21	22	23	23	22	22	25	31	37
Thames Valley	27	26	23	25	28	28	30	31	33	32	29	32	39	49
Warwickshire	16	15	15	18	20	21	23	22	23	25	23	25	31	39
West Mercia	19	17	17	20	23	23	24	24	25	24	23	24	29	35
West Midlands	25	23	25	28	31	31	34	35	38	38	33	32	37	42
West Yorkshire	26	24	25	27	29	28	31	31	32	33	31	34	42	55
Wiltshire	20	18	18	20	22	22	24	25	25	23	22	23	27	31

[1] Excluding offences of criminal damage value £20 and under.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what form the planned review of the nuclear power industry will take.

Mr. Eggar: As stated in the White Paper, "The Prospects for Coal", a further announcement about the review of the future prospects for nuclear power will be made later this year.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what are the current delays in the installation of security systems at Trawsfwynnd, Haysham, Oldbury and Dungeness nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what Government scrutiny there has been in the awarding of security contracts by Nuclear Electric; and what complaints have been received concerning the completion of the contracts;

(3) what tendering arrangements were made for security systems at Britain's nuclear power stations; and to whom the contract was awarded.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Security schemes at nuclear power stations are subject to agreement with the Government. The awarding of contracts in relation to security schemes is a commercial matter for the operator concerned.

Export Control

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) of 31 March, *Official Report*, column *212*, if he will make a statement on the relationship between his Department's export control office and his export intelligence system under the contract extension for Prelink Ltd.

Mr. Needham: The export intelligence system contracted to Pre-Link publishes information about overseas sales opportunities. It does not remove the requirement, where that exists, for a seller to obtain an export licence.

Direct Selling

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints about illegal direct selling schemes were received by trading standards officers in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990, *(c)* 1991 and *(d)* 1992.

Mr. Leigh: There is no obligation for trading standards officers to keep statistics on matters such as this, for which they have no powers or obligations.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much in existing guarantees by the ECGD was *(a)* at risk, *(b)* in default, *(c)* written off and *(d)* still being used in each year from 1985 to privatisation; and what is the extent of Government liability for such accumulated and risks.

Mr. Needham: The information requested has been published in ECGD's trading accounts from 1985-86, copies of which can be found in the Library. For convenience the relevant details are brought together in the following table:

	Amount at risk[1] £ million	*Amount in default*[1] *(paid claims and interest)* £ million	*Amount written off (annual)* £ million	*Total provision*[1] £ million
1985-86	27,770	2,107·6	35·8	976·4
1986-87	23,794	2,623·6	25·5	1,481·9
1987-88	23,154	4,017·0	25·2	3,147·5
1988-89	21,584	5,103·4	66·2	4,176·1
1989-90	20,717	6,364·8	59·9	7,916·5
1990-91	19,533	7,071·3	38·5	8,511·9
1991-92	17,958	8,118·5	47·9	8,539·5

[1] Balance as at 31 March.

Amounts at risk
These amounts represent ECGD's gross contingent liability under extant guarantees excluding unrecovered claims payments.

Amounts in default
These comprise gross paid claims, plus interest, which have not been recovered or written off.

Amounts written off
These sums relate to the amounts in relation to which recovery action has been abandoned during the year in question.
In order to give a more rounded picture the table also includes the total provision in respect of losses on unrecovered claims and amounts at risk. This represents the cumulative amounts which have been charged to ECGD's trading accounts.

Relocation

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the criteria on which decisions on his Department's relocations are based.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* The key factors in deciding whether and where to relocate the work of the various parts of my Department are achieving the best value for money and operational efficiency.

Mixed Oxide Fuel

Mr. Hood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the timetable is for the construction of the new Sellafield mixed oxide fuel plant (SMP); and when he expects it to be operational.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Work on the proposed Sellafield mixed oxide fuel plant has not yet reached the stage of taking a decision to proceed with construction.

Ministerial Engagements

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list *(a)* his official engagements and *(b)* those of the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) on (i) 30 March, (ii) 31 March and (iii) 1 April.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 14 April 1993]:* Following the debate on the Government's coal review on 29 March, both my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I had a full programme of official engagements on the following three days.

My right hon. Friend attended Cabinet on 1 April as well as two Cabinet Committees and other meetings with Cabinet colleagues and overseas visitors in this period. I had a bilateral with the Danish Minister for Energy on 1 April and three constituency engagements during those three days. We both voted in the House on 30 and 31 March.

Post and Telecommunications Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to seek further advice from Kleinwort Benson, KPMG, Price Waterhouse and others on the Post Office review in the 1993-94 financial year; and what provision has been made for payment for this advice in the current year's budget for his Department.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 15 April 1993]:* My Department will continue to take advice from external consultants on the Post Office review as necessary. Payment for any such work in 1993-94 would be made from the total sum allocated by my Department for consultancy (£6,429,000) on sub-heading C3(2) of class IV, vote 1 (HC 495-IV). Final allocations have not yet been made within this overall figure.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the balance of payments in *(a)* post and *(b)* telecommunications services in the last five years, distinguishing between the balance of payments with other countries of the European Community and elsewhere.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 April 1993]* Separate information for *(a)* post and *(b)* telecommunication services is not available. Information on overall United Kingdom overseas transactions in post and telecommunication services is published by the Central Statistical Office in "The Pink Book, United Kingdom Balance of Payments" which is available in the Library of the House.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 222**

SESSION 1992–93

29th March, 1993—16th April, 1993

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1
A66 299w
Dual carriageways 587-8w
Scotland 587-8w

A45
(16:04:93) 1083-90

A66
A1 299w

A75
Dual carriageways 350-2

A92
Public petitions (31:03:93) 470

A595
Bypasses 168w

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
M25 (01:04:93) 640
South East region (01:04:93) 622
Questions
Community care, Health visitors 612w
Consumer expenditure 747w
Curriculum, Codes of practice 543w
Lone parents, Energy prices 665w
M11, Road construction 693w
Police stations, Stoke Newington 719w
Regional planning & development, Hackney 729w

Abortion
Immigration controls 624-5w

Absent parents
(01:04:93) 713-27

"Abuse of Market Power Consultation Paper"
(14:04:93) 842-50

Access to countryside
Fees & charges 586-7w
Inheritance tax 227-8w
Scotland 586-7w

Access to Health Records (Northern Ireland) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

Access to parliament
House of Commons catering 463w

Accident & emergency departments
Dundee 150-1w
Stracathro Hospital 151w
Stracathro Hospital 148w, 150w

Acute beds
Hospital admissions 311-2w
London Implementation Group 32w
Scotland 311-2w

Addresses to the Crown
Election expenses (15:04:93) 931

Adley, Mr Robert
Questions
European Parliament constituencies 936
Lloyd's of London, Tax allowances 229w

Administration of justice
937-8
Judges 429-30w

Admissibility of evidence
Evidence 623w
Video recordings 382w, 623w

Adult education
Greater London 431w

Advertising codes of practice
Women 204w

Advice & Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Advice & Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Advice & Assistance (Scotland) (Prospective Costs) Amendment Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Advisory bodies
Public appointments 689-90w

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs
608-10w

Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service
Annual reports 683w

"Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service Annual Report, 1992"
683w

Advisory services
Immigration 111w

AEA Technology
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Aer Lingus
Government assistance 438-9w

Aerospace industry
211w, 554w
Government grants 211-2w, 404w
Innovation 554w

Afghanistan
Overseas aid 118w

Age discrimination
467-8w

Agency nurses
Professional qualifications 585w
Scotland 585w

Agricultural & Food Research Council
91w

Agricultural Inspectorate
341-2w

Agricultural subsidies
453w
Potatoes 565-6w

Agricultural Training Board
327w
Secretarial staff 109w

Agriculture
Environment protection 451w
Public expenditure 49w

Agriculture Bill (HL) 1992/93
Questions
245w

AIDS
Bromley 186-7w

AIDS support grant
London boroughs 613-4w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 447-9
Questions
EC grants & loans, Wales 84-5w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 61-2w
Pensions 77w, 169-70w
Special protection areas 59w
Uniform business rate, Wales 89w

Ainsworth, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 885, 894-8
M25 (01:04:93) 626-8, 639
Questions
Medicines Control Agency, Finance 179-80w
Stamp duties 368w

Air force
Radio engineering 173w

Air force bases
Sea rescue 506w

Air France
Government assistance 439w

Air pollution
EC law 532w
Greater London 529w
ReChem International 137-8w
Urban areas 532w

Air pollution control
Greater London 673w

Air traffic
Belfast Airport 639w
Heathrow Airport 693-4w
London airports 694w

Air travel
Consumer protection 562-4w

Air travel organisers licence
Tour operators 562-4w

Airlines
Airports 355w
Government assistance 438-9w
Licensing 297-9w

Airport security
Belfast Airport 639w

Airports
Airlines 355w
Charter flights 355-6w

***Aitken, Mr Jonathan**, Minister of State for Defence Procurement*
Questions
Air force, Radio engineering 173w
Ammunition, Defence contracts 324w
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 497-503
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Documents 570w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Contracts for services 569w
AWE Aldermaston, Buildings 499-501w
AWE Aldermaston, Capital investment 501w
AWE Aldermaston, Contractorisation 323w
AWE Aldermaston, Decommissioning 499-500w
AWE Aldermaston, Hunting-Brae 501w
Defence equipment, Surpluses 323w
Defence research establishments, Testing 502w
Dockyards, Emergency planning 505w
European cooperative longterm initiative in defence, UK contributions 322w
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 16w, 321w, 570w
HMS Fort Victoria, Defence procurement 720w
Incinerators, Kineton 501-2w
Jasmin plc, Defence contracts 504w
Management consultants 324-5w
Management consultants, Expenditure 194w
Ministry of Defence, Contracts for services 325w
Ministry of Defence, Ethnic monitoring 323-4w
Ministry of Defence, Higher civil servants 323w, 500w, 572-4w
Ministry of Defence, Management consultants 176w
Ministry of Defence, Northern Ireland 505w
Nuclear submarines, Shipbuilding 505w
Nuclear weapons tests, Expenditure 16w, 569w
Sellafield, Decommissioning 502w
Strategic defence initiative, Defence contracts 177w
Trident submarines, Sonar 324w
Upholder class submarines, Defence procurement 720w

Albert Memorial
Repairs & maintenance 119-20w

Alcohol advertising
Health warnings 364w

Alcoholic drinks duties
Tax harmonisation 370w

Alcoholism
Residential care 471w
Social services 470w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 81-3
Questions
Limited list prescribing 238w

Ali, Ghazanfer
127w

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 845
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 184, 194
Intelligence services (29:03:93) 132, 136
Questions
Bletchley Park Trust 354-5w
Magistrates, Resignations 426w

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
British citizenship 96w
European Parliament constituencies 383w, 937
Immigration controls, Abortion 624-5w
Immigration controls, Disclosure of information 626w
Jasmin plc, Defence contracts 504w
RECHAR, East Midlands 498-9w
Regional government 377w

Alliance & Leicester (Girobank) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
(29:03:93) 128

Alternative energy
486

Alternative medicine
Family doctors 31w

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Channel Islands, Nazi war crimes 685-6w
Clarence Dock, Land acquisition 509-10w
Council tax, Handicapped 58w
Egypt, Overseas aid 465w
Egypt, Religious discrimination 540w
Hospices, Children 364w
Orthopaedics, Surgery 31w
Schizophrenia, Medical research 670w
Schizophrenia, Mental patients 611w
Schizophrenia, Social security benefits 666w
Schizophrenia, World Health Organisation 611w
Sefton Park Palm House, Repairs & maintenance 135-6w

Alyn & Deeside
Development areas 11

Alyn & Deeside District Council
138w

Amber Valley
Grant maintained schools 150

Ambulance services
Angus 310-1w
Manpower 363w
NHS trusts 181w
Paramedical staff 309-10w
Scotland 309-10w
Tayside 310w

Ambulances
311w

Amendments & new clauses
(30:03:93) 161-4, (15:04:93) 959-61, 963-4, 967-9

Amersham International
Radioactive waste disposal 681w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Hoover, Marketing (01:04:93) 553-5
Local government services (16:04:93) 1061-5
Questions
Council tax, Basildon 496
Hazardous wastes, EC law 517-8w
Young offenders 720w

Ammunition
Defence contracts 324w
Uranium 193w

Anaesthetics
Out-patient clinics 466w

Ancient & Historical Monuments in Wales Royal Commission
415w

Ancient Monuments Board for Wales
462w

Ancram, Mr Michael
Questions
Armed forces housing, Property transfer 176w
Armed forces housing, Shared ownership schemes 175-6w, 326w
Council housing, Exservicemen 57w
Health services, Elderly 467-8w
Russia, Foreign relations 811

Andersen Consulting
17w, 48w, 78-81w, 92w, 114-8w, 176w, 178w, 346-7w, 416w, 706-12w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 857, 866, 867, 869, 879-82
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Public petitions (29:03:93) 129
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 393
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 519
Questions
Business questions 507
Police, Wales 8
Refuges, Wales 266w

Angola
Armed conflict 576w
Peace negotiations 576w

Angus
Ambulance services 310-1w
Hospitals 311w

Animal Aunts
(01:04:93) 728-34

Animal cruelty
Law reform 751w

Animal experiments
Genetic engineering 103-4w
Ministerial powers 103-4w

Animal welfare
Markets 48-9w
Shamrock Farms 381-2w
Sheep (14:04:93) 854
Terrorism 431w

Animals
Poisoning 564w

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
Questions
103-4w
Veterinary services 725w

Annual reports
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 683w
Bank of England 479w
Interception of Communications Commissioner 203-4w
Security Service Commissioner 203w

Arab boycott
579w
Overseas trade 493w

Arachnoiditis
Back pain (14:04:93) 924-30

Arbuthnot, Mr James, An Assistant Whip
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (02:04:93) 804

Archaeology
Local government staff 679w

Armed conflict
Angola 576w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 492-4, 497-503, 508w, 540w, 571w, 576-8w, 814, 819-21, 826, 946
Cambodia 83w
Yugoslavia 124w, 577w, 814-5, 944

Armed forces
Belize 175w
Blood sports 11-4w
Guatemala 175w
Pigeons 177w

Armed forces civilians
Gosport 505w

Armed forces deployment
506w
Belize 15w, 83w
HMS Ark Royal 720w
Iran 741w
Kosovo 174-5w
Macedonia 174-5w
Sudan 741w
United Arab Emirates 15w

Armed forces discharges
Armed forces housing 321-2w
Scotland 572w

Armed forces housing
Armed forces discharges 321-2w
Empty housing 572w
Housing associations 60-1w
Housing trusts 195w
Property transfer 176w
Public sector housing sales 508w, 569-70w
Scotland 572w
Shared ownership schemes 175-6w, 326w

Armed forces officers
Social class 504w

Armed forces pensions
539w

Armed forces strength
Gosport 505w
Iraq 173w

Armed forces training
Law of war 571w
United Arab Emirates 15w

Arms exports
South Africa 687w

Arms to Iraq Inquiry
739-40w
Costs 739w
Customs & Excise 374w
Departmental records 716w
Documents 570w

Arms trade
United Arab Emirates 161w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Industrial tribunals, Administrative delays 108w
Industrial tribunals, Unemployment benefits 336-7w

Army Base Repair Organisation
193-4w

Army bases
Ministry of Defence police 508w

Army in Northern Ireland
Pay incentives 325w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Questions
Chartermark scheme 18
National Union of Rail Maritime & Transport Workers, Strikes 944-5

Arrests
Domestic violence 222w
Terrorism 732w

Arson
School buildings 412w
Wales 412w

Arthur Andersen
17w, 48w, 78-81w, 92w, 114-8w, 176w, 178w, 346-7w, 416w, 706-12w

Arts Council
691w
Arts finance 691w

Arts finance
Arts Council 691w
Regional arts boards 691w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 859, 862, 867
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 398

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 493-4, 946

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 33

Asian immigrants
Immigration rules 112w

Assembly of Welsh Counties
218-9w

Assisted areas
496w
Llanelli 4-5
Portsmouth 205w
South Wales 3
Wales 88w

Assisted places scheme
66-74w
Cost per pupil 684-5w
Newcastle 684-5w
School fees 431-5w

Association of Chief Police Officers
218-9w

Asthma
Medical research 470w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Belfast Airport, Air traffic 639w
Belfast Airport, Airport security 639w
Belfast Airport, EC grants & loans 639w
Belfast Airport, Manpower 639-40w
Belfast Airport, Privatisation 639w
Belfast Harbour 629w
Bus services, Manpower 631w
Company liquidations, Northern Ireland 636w
Driving licences, Civil service agencies 449-50w
Electricity supply industry, Northern Ireland 274w
Electricity tariffs, Northern Ireland 274-5w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 61-2w
Employment discrimination, Private companies 657-8w
Employment opportunities, Londonderry 655w

Atkins, Mr Robert—continued
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland, Manpower 633-4w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 628-9w, 637-8w, 642-8w
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, Manpower 627w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 631w, 647-56w
"Growing a Green Economy" 657w
Housing, Belfast 732-3w
Housing associations, Homelessness 273w
Housing associations, Housing construction 269w, 271w
Housing associations, Northern Ireland 269-71w
Housing associations, Temporary accommodation 273-4w
Housing associations, Waiting lists 272-3w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, Manpower 627w
Lost working days, Northern Ireland 641w
Northern Ireland district councils, Manpower 634w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Direct labour departments 398-400w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing associations 273w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing stock 397-8w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Rent arrears 631w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Waiting lists 269w, 630w
Ports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 640w
Religion, Belfast Airport 401w
Religion, Civil service 275w
Religion, Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland 627w
Religion, General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland 671w
Religion, Local Enterprise Development Unit 401w
Religion, Northern Ireland district councils 275-6w
Religion, Northern Ireland Railways 400-1w
Religion, Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company 401w
Religion, Ulsterbus 401w
Road construction, Construction costs 632w
Road salting & gritting, Northern Ireland 627w
Squatting, Housing estates 630-1w
Tourism, Northern Ireland 635w
Trust ports, Privatisation 641w
Unemployment, Belfast 637w

Atkinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 430-2
Questions
Commission for the New Towns 289w

Atomic Weapons Establishment
Contracts for services 501w, 569w

Attorney General
Disabled workers 344-5w
Ethnic minorities 344-5w
Ethnic monitoring 344w
Higher civil servants 345-6w
Women 344w

Auctions
Livestock 449w, 451-2w, 458w, 522w

Audit
Wessex Regional Health Authority 184-6w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
236-7w, 607w

Australia
Coal prices 50w
Nuclear weapons tests (01:04:93) 645-52

Automated credit transfer
77-8w

AWE Aldermaston
Buildings 499-501w
Capital investment 501w
Contractorisation 323w
Decommissioning 499-500w
Hunting-Brae 501w

AWE Burghfield
57w

AWE Cardiff
Radioactive waste disposal 681w

Ayrshire
Local government reform 348

Azapropazone
Drug side effects 179w

Back pain
Arachnoiditis (14:04:93) 924-30

Badgers
Pest control 110w, 138-9w, 245w, 268-9w
Scotland 148w, 313w

Bail
688w

Baker Committee
see Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force

Balance of payments
Engineering industries 948
Postal services 762w
Telecommunications industry 762w

Balance of trade
Manufactured goods 161-2w

Baldry, Mr Tony, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
A45, Bourn (16:04:93) 1085-90
Housing (01:04:93) 706-12
South East region (01:04:93) 621-5
Questions
AWE Burghfield 57w
Building industry, Merseyside 679w
Building Research Establishment, Contracts 58w
Commission for the New Towns 289w
Community Selfbuild Agency 513w
Council house sales 345-6w
Council housing, Exservicemen 57w
Council housing, Housing construction 531w
County Hall, Property transfer 730w
Domestic rents 678-9w
Environment protection, Greater London 678w
Homelessness, Greater London 515-6w, 529w, 677w
Homelessness, Night shelters 132w
Homelessness, Temporary accommodation 132w
House condition survey 510w
Housing association grant 511-2w
Housing associations, Ealing 129w
Housing associations, EC law 675w
Housing construction, Greater London 530-1w
Housing insulation, Building regulations 57w
Housing investment programmes, Greater London 673w
Housing Partnership Fund 349w
Land use, Birmingham 348w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 511w
Local government, Greater London 513w
Local government reform, Greater London 135w
Mackmurdo Building 59w
Olympic Games, Greater London 349-50w
Planning appeals, Legal costs 58w
Planning permission, Demolition 514-5w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 59w, 348w
Private rented housing, Domestic appliances 131-2w, 731w

Baldry, Mr Tony—continued
Public sector housing, Government grants 278-82w
Public sector housing, Housing construction 677-8w
RECHAR, East Midlands 498-9w
Regional planning & development, Hackney 729w
Regional planning & development, South East region 132w
Structure plans, Devon 531-2w
Temporary accommodation, Cookers 58w
Tenants' choice 282w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 527w
Travelling people, Trespass 289-90w
Unitary development plans, Greater London 130w
Unitary development plans, Solihull 347w
Urban areas 513w

Bank for Reconstruction & Development of Europe
see European Development Bank

Bank of Credit & Commerce International
Barlow Clowes 145w
Local authorities 18w

Bank of England
225w, 478-9w, 747-8w
Annual reports 479w
Banking supervision 373w
Credit 478-9w, 749w

Banking supervision
Bank of England 373w

Banks
Small businesses 747-8w
Tax yields 142-3w

Banks, Mr Matthew
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 946
British Rail, Management 3w
British Rail, Occupational pensions 697w
British Rail, Privatisation 3-5w
Indonesia, Foreign policy 122w
Preserved railways, Railways Bill 1992/93 696w
Railway fares, Travel cards 696w
Railway freight transport, Government grants 695w
Railway freight transport, Privatisation 696w
Railway Heritage Trust 696w
Railway land, Land ownership & tenure 4w
Railway network, Private investment 695w
Red Star, Privatisation 3w
Transport infrastructure, Private investment 5w
Transport police 694-5w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 836
Channel tunnel, Railway network (02:04:93) 802
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 167, 171
Local government services (16:04:93) 1021, 1062
M25 (01:04:93) 638-40
South East region (01:04:93) 587, 591, 602, 616-21, 624
Whales, Nature conservation (02:04:93) 803-7
Questions
Business questions 957-8
Jubilee line, Construction 162w
London Forum, Costs 284w
London Forum, Finance 284w
Metropolitan Police 942
Public appointments, Business 285w

Barking
Railway safety 440w

Barlow Clowes
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 145w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1031, 1076-8
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 115
Questions
Air pollution, EC law 532w
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 502
EC Environment Council, Voting behaviour 532w
EC Finance Council, Voting behaviour 19-20w
EC Transport Council, Voting behaviour 2w
Electorate, Newbury 34-6w
VAT, Tax yields 368w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 37-8, 109-10

Basel Convention
517-8w

Basildon
Council tax 496

Basking sharks
Fish conservation 49w
Fishing catches 49w

Bates, Mr Michael
Questions
Central Veterinary Laboratory, Performance standards 247w
Chartermark scheme 13
Exports, Government assistance 487
Government Property Lawyers Agency 16-7w
Teachers, Pay 153w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Performance standards 244w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 85-7
Questions
Contracts for services, Dept of Employment 92w
Contracts for services, Dept of Health 236w
Contracts for services, Dept of Social Security 169w
Contracts for services, Dept of the Environment 282-3w
Contracts for services, Dept of Trade & Industry 50w
Contracts for services, Dept of Transport 1w
Contracts for services, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 83w
Contracts for services, Home Office 222w
Contracts for services, Lord Chancellor's Dept 198-200w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 109w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Defence 325w
Contracts for services, Treasury 225w
Israel, Peace negotiations 817
Students, Suicide 353w

Battered women
Legal aid scheme 337

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Housing (01:04:93) 699-707
Questions
Armed forces housing, Housing associations 60-1w
Armed forces housing, Public sector housing sales 569-70w
Business expansion scheme, Rent increases 438w
Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force 675w
First time buyers 674w

Battle, Mr John—continued
Health service staff, Pay 605w
Homelessness, Local government expenditure 529w
Housing associations, Rented housing 745w
Housing associations as managing agents scheme 674-5w
Housing cooperatives, Management agreements 675w
Land acquisition, Mortgages 526w
Mortgages 528w
NHS trusts, Pay 603w
Police, Urban Crime Fund 935-6
Rents to mortgages scheme, Secured loans 530w
"Rough Sleepers Initiative Consultation Paper" 530w
Sleeping rough, Greater London 530w
Squatting, Law reform 619w

Baxter Healthcare
NHS 364w

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
British Rail, Public petitions (14:04:93) 923
Local government services (16:04:93) 1028-30, 1038-44, 1055
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 4w
Income support, Elderly 74-5w, 491-2w
Psychogeriatries, Hospital beds 360-1w

BBC Northern Ireland
Religion 735w

Beauty therapy
Licensing 680w

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Questions
Business statements 504-5, 949-50

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Income support 77w

Beef
Intervention stocks 567w
Origin marking 566w

Beef premiums
Expenditure 308w
Scotland 308w

Beer
Measurement 50w

Bees
Gwent 88w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 275, 281, 318
Questions
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Local authorities 18w
Crime, Newtownabbey 396-7w
Electricity supply industry, Northern Ireland 274w
International Fund for Ireland, Hotels 275w
Police patrolling, Newtownabbey 397w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Disabled workers 146w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Legal representation 395w
Students, Housing benefits 642w
Terrorism, Republic of Ireland 538-9w
Wasting police time, Prosecutions 395w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Questions
Budget March 1993, Charities 368w
Class sizes, Rural areas 155w

Belfast
Housing 732-3w
Unemployment 637w

Belfast Airport
Air traffic 639w
Airport security 639w

Belfast Airport—continued
EC grants & loans 639w
Manpower 639-40w
Ports 640w
Privatisation 639w
Religion 401w
Sexual offences 640w

Belfast City Hospital
Hospital doctors 62w

Belfast Harbour
629w

Belize
Armed forces 175w
Armed forces deployment 15w, 83w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Farriers 499-500w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board, Health & Safety Executive 334w
South Korea, Foreign relations 822-3

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Documents, Points of order (29:03:93) 21-2
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 29, 33, 62-4

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 971
Questions
Meningitis, Vaccination 362-3w
Recycling, Expenditure 276-7w
Tipping of waste, Gases 276w
Waste management, Expenditure 276w

Benzodiazepines
Self help 180-1w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Legal aid (Scotland) regulations (31:03:93) 381-3

Betts, Mr Clive
Questions
Economic growth, Unemployment 368-9w

Bill of Rights
44w

Binder Hamlyn
703-4w

Birds
Import of live animals 749w
Nature conservation 131w

Birmingham
Burglary 623w
Land use 348w

Birmingham City Council
148
Educational finance 436w

Blackburn, Dr John G
Questions
Armed forces housing, Housing trusts 195w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 866, 870-7
Questions
Police, Prisoner escorts 934
Treshman, Don, Immigration controls 750-1w

Bletchley Park Trust
354-5w
Museums & galleries 52w

Blood donors
Palace of Westminster 147w

Blood sports
Armed forces 11-4w
Defence land 11w
Forestry Commission 589w

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs 608-10w
Computers in National Health Service, Wessex Regional Health Authority 608w
District health authorities 35-6w
GP fundholders 606w
Health, Coal mine closures 185w
Health, Heating 187w
London Implementation Group, Acute beds 32w
NHS finance, South East region 37-40w
Primary health care, Greater London 33w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 609-11w
Royal Marsden Hospital, Repairs & maintenance 240-1w
Wessex Regional Health Authority, Departmental correspondence 608w

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boateng, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Legal aid (Scotland) regulations (31:03:93) 391, 398-401
Questions
Community care, Single homeless 21-2w
Ethnic minorities, Government grants to local authorities 96w
Judges 344w
Judges, Age 343w
Legal aid scheme, Contracts for services 199-200w
Recorders, Ethnic minorities 343w
Recorders, Women 343w
Skillcentres, Kilburn 107-8w

Body, Sir Richard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 226, 262, 298, 299
Welfare of Animals at Market Bill, 1R (14:04:93) 852

Body searches
113-4w, 624w
Northern Ireland 146w

Bolton
Ministers' domestic visits 90w

Bolton Borough Council
Building repairs 350w
Contracts for services 350w

Bombings
Compensation 750w
Terrorism 750w

Bone marrow disorders
Scotland 585w
Transplant surgery 585w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 832

Booth, Mr Hartley
Questions
Council of Ministers 486-7w
Council tax capping 350w
Cycling, Safety equipment 738w
Next steps initiative 332-4w
Racial discrimination 752w
Religious education, Curriculum 153w

Borders region
502-4w
Structure plans 306w
Village schools 347

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Armed conflict 492-4, 497-503, 508w, 540w, 571w, 576-8w, 814, 819-21, 826, 946
Military aircraft 577-8w
Ministerial statements (14:04:93) 829-41
Rape 576w

Boswell, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Debates etc.
Dovelands School Leicester (15:04:93) 1005-10
Questions
Adult education, Greater London 431w
Dept for Education, Computer privacy 547-8w
Dept for Education, Ethnic minorities 216w
Dept for Education, Ethnic monitoring 216w
Dept for Education, Higher civil servants 216w
Dept for Education, Public appointments 551w
Education & industry 156w
Educational publications, Cost per pupil 150
Further education, Departmental leaflets 541-2w
GCE AS level 143-4
Grant maintained schools 150-1
Grant maintained schools, Amber Valley 150
Handicapped students, Student grants 64w
Handicapped students, Universities 63-4w
Higher education 436w
Higher education, Tuition fees 216-7w, 436w
Languages education 155w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Local Education Business Partnerships 436w
Medical education, Student numbers 548w
Overseas students, Student numbers 65w
Social sciences education, General certificate of secondary education 154w
Special education, Teacher training 552w
Staff-student ratios, Further education 352w
Students, Suicide 353w
Teachers, Local education authorities 545-7w
Teachers, Pay 542-4w
Youth services 155w

Bottles
Recycling 716w

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 971, 991-2
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 163w
Bus services, Privatisation 1-2w
Cars 166w
Commercial Court, Judges 196-7w
Contracts for services, Government departments 215w
Debts written off, Developing countries 144w
London Buses, Privatisation 438w
Play, Children 63w
Social science research, Research finance 215w
UNESCO, UK contributions 81-2w
Yugoslavia, Armed conflict 814-5

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia, Secretary of State for Health
Questions
London Ambulance Service 239-40w
Medicines Control Agency 365w
Medicines Control Agency, Finance 179-80w

Boundary Commission for England
Essex 104w

Bourn
Property development (16:04:93) 1083-90

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Shamrock Farms, Animal welfare 381-2w

Bowis, Mr John
Questions
Albert Memorial, Repairs & maintenance 119-20w
Animal experiments, Genetic engineering 103-4w
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 503
Cambodia, Armed conflict 83w
Further education colleges, Land acquisition 217w
Mackmurdo Building 59w
Parent & child 139-40
Road traffic control, Greater London 355w
Social Fund, Judicial review 666w

Boyce, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 34-5
Questions
Middle East, Peace negotiations 573-4w

Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Questions
School attendance, Computer applications 158w

Brackletter
Compulsory purchase 149w
Waste disposal 149w

Bradford County Court
Care proceedings 426w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Handicapped, Energy prices 665w
Invalid care allowances, Energy prices 702-3w
Invalid care allowances, Pensioners 703w

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Debates etc.
Legal aid (Scotland) regulations (31:03:93) 371
Questions
Medicines Control Agency 365w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Questions
Hong Kong, China 818
Industrial training schemes, Lanarkshire 342-3

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 42
Questions
Planning appeals, Legal costs 58w

Breast cancer
Screening 137w

Bridges
Construction costs 167w
River Forth 342
River Thames 560-1w

Brilliant pebbles programme
177w

British Approvals Board for Telecommunications
204-5w

British citizenship
96w
Hong Kong 104w

British Coal Corporation
(29:03:93) 25-125, 954
Finance 210-1w
Government assistance 713w

British Council
Wales 410w

British Council of Organisations of Disabled People
488w

British Legion
see Royal British Legion

British Nuclear Fuels
50w, 704w
UK companies abroad 705w

British Overseas Trade Board
496w

British Paper & Board Industry Federation
493w

British Rail
338, 442w, 492, 562w, (01:04:93) 584-625, 696w
Consumer protection 359-60w
Investment 555-6w
Management 3w
Occupational pensions 2-3w, 359w, 697w
Performance standards 163-5w
Privatisation 2-5w, 162-3w, 695-6w, (14:04:93) 923
Public petitions (14:04:93) 923
Railway fares 441-2w

British Railways Bill 1990/91
Debates etc.
(29:03:93) 128

British Railways (No 4) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

British Technology Group
Privatisation 714w

British Telecom
349

British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

Broadcasting Act 1990
Questions
Equal opportunities 119w

Broadcasting Standards Council
(01:04:93) 564-83

Broadleaved woodlands
Wood 589w

Broadmoor Hospital
Noise 672-3w
Patients' rights 672-3w

Bromley
AIDS 186-7w

Bronchitis
659-61w
Industrial diseases 76-7w
Industrial injuries scheme 492-3w

***Brooke, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for National Heritage*
Questions
Advisory bodies, Public appointments 689-90w
Albert Memorial, Repairs & maintenance 119-20w
Archaeology, Local government staff 679w
Arts Council, Arts finance 691w
Broadcasting Act 1990, Equal opportunities 119w
Dept of National Heritage, Private investment 483w
Dept of National Heritage, Public appointments 481w
Hospital radio, Radio frequencies 63w
National Transcommunications, Privatisation 689-90w
Objects in lieu of tax 233w
Regional arts boards, Arts finance 691w
Religion, BBC Northern Ireland 735w
Royal Parks Agency 354w
S4C, Television viewers 482w
Sports Aid Foundation, Government grants 233w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Questions
Dockyards, Emergency planning 505w
Nuclear submarines, Shipbuilding 505w
VAT, Fuels 480-1, 491

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Hospitals, Trafford (01:04:93) 531
Recess motions, Easter (01:04:93) 557-60, 561, 563
Questions
Corporation tax, Tax burden 482
Ministers' visits abroad, Travelling expenses 304w

Brown & Root
501w, 569w

Browning, Mrs Angela
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 846
Questions
Mental health review tribunals 238w
Mentally Disordered Offenders Services Review, Health services 466w
Mentally ill, Death 363w
VAT, Fuels 491

Bruce, Mr Ian
Questions
Business questions 953
Chartermark scheme 13-4
Devolution, Scotland 308w
Hong Kong, China 818-9
Local government reform, Scotland 346
NHS trusts, Wales 6-7
Verne Prison, Prison staff 725w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
A92, Public petitions (31:03:93) 470
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 44
Questions
School buildings, Gordon 307w

Brussels
Ministers' visits abroad 267w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 223-4, 228-9, 257, 300, 302, 304, (15:04:93) 964-5

Budget March 1993
368-70w
Charities 368w
Environment protection 486-7
Investment 369w
VAT 370w

Budgeting
Police authorities 934-5

Building industry
Merseyside 679w

Building regulations
Housing insulation 57w

Building repairs
Bolton Borough Council 350w

Building Research Establishment
Contracts 58w

Buildings
AWE Aldermaston 499-501w

Burden, Mr Richard
Questions
Council tax, Residential care 675w
Housing association grant 511-2w
Land use, Birmingham 348w
Pate de foie gras 564w
Pharmacists, Fees & charges 599w
VAT, Fuels 367w
Water meters 519-20w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority, Publications 185w

Burglary
Birmingham 623w

Burnley Pendle & Rossendale Health Authority
Perinatal mortality 469-70w

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 232, 233
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Annual reports 683w
Boundary Commission for England, Essex 104w
Exports 369-70w
Finance (No 2) Bill 1992/93 438w
Government securities 230-1w
Housing benefits, Pensioners 77w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 76w
Inland Revenue, Electronic funds transfer 374w
Overseas investment, Income tax on investment incomes 226w
Securities & Investments Board, Self-regulating organisations 749w
Squatting, Law reform 619-20w

***Burt, Mr Alistair**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security*
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (01:04:93) 720-7
Questions
Child Support Act 1991, Ethnic minorities 488w
Child Support Act 1991, European Charter of Rights of the Child 487-8w
Child Support Agency 303w
Child support officers, Codes of practice 303w
Council tax benefits 419-20w
Dept of Social Security, Postal services 170w
Handicapped, Energy prices 665w
Housing benefits, Pensioners 77w
Housing benefits, Social security claims 76w
Income support, Bed & breakfast accommodation 77w
Income support, Elderly 74-5w, 491-2w
Income support, Pensioner premium 421w
Income support, Social security benefits rates 418w
Income support, Social security benefits rules 702w
Income support, Unemployment benefits 170w
"Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiry, May 1992" 701-2w
"Introduction to Council Tax Benefits" 703w
Invalid care allowances, Pensioners 703w
Learning for work, 21 hour rule 418w
Lone parents, Energy prices 665w
Low incomes 303w
Maintenance, Social security benefits rules 658-9w
Means tested benefits 301-2w
Means tested benefits, Pensioners 416-7w
Means tested benefits, Social security recipients 417-8w
Pensioners, Energy prices 421w
Residential allowance, Social security benefits rules 492w
Severe hardship provision, Young people 488-9w
Social security & taxation, Marginal tax rates 302w
Social security benefits, Residential care 423-4w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Performance standards 300-1w
Social security recipients, Energy prices 76-7w, 666w
Temporary accommodation, Social security benefits 659w

Bus services
Contracts 440w
Greater London 1-2w, 440w, 558-9w

Bus services—continued
Health service staff 171w
Manpower 631w
Passengers 558-9w
Privatisation 1-2w, 559w

Buses
Exhaust emissions 529w, 560w
Greater London 559w
Road traffic 440w

Business
France 495-6w
Public appointments 285w

Business & the Environment Advisory Committee
676w

Business expansion scheme
Rent increases 438w

Business questions
505-10, 950-8

Business start-up scheme
East Anglia 93w
Employment opportunities 93w

Business statements
504-5, 949-50

Butler, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 384, 386

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 55, 59, 60
Questions
Business questions 951-2

Buxton
Listed buildings 731-2w

By election writs
Newbury (14:04:93) 813

Byers, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 163
Questions
Assisted places scheme 66-74w
Assisted places scheme, School fees 431-5w
Council tax 154
Crown courts, Criminal proceedings 425-6w
Guinness, Legal aid 6w

Bypasses
A595 168w

Cabinet Office
533-4w
Disabled workers 129w
Ethnic minorities 129w
Higher civil servants 45w
Women 129w

Cabinet papers
Environment protection 464w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures, Points of order (29:03:93) 22
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 48, 49, 51, 52-7, 59, 115

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Violence, Television (01:04:93) 564-8
Questions
Crime prevention, North West region 220-1w
Offenders, Greater Manchester 95-6w
Offensive weapons, Greater Manchester 113w
Pre-school education, School population 140

Cambodia
Armed conflict 83w

Cambridgeshire
Town & country planning (16:04:93) 1083-90

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Questions
Business questions 954
Energy research, Research finance 206w
Grant maintained schools 147
Pre-payment certificates 236w
Prescription charges exemptions 178w
Prescriptions, Expenditure 361-2w
VAT, Domestic energy consumption 367w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 832
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 184-5, 196-202, 205, 214-7
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 365, 373
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 498
Road construction, Fife 341-2

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Bill of Rights 44w
Immigration rules, Asian immigrants 112w
Management consultants, Dept of Employment 92w
Management consultants, Dept of Health 178w
Management consultants, Dept of Social Security 416w
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 346-7w
Management consultants, Dept of Trade & Industry 706-12w
Management consultants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 78-81w
Management consultants, Home Office 114-8w
Management consultants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 48w
Management consultants, Ministry of Defence 176w
Management consultants, Treasury 17w
Mortgages 371w
Occupied territories, Israel 579-80w
Political parties, Finance 44w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 835
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 461
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 364
Oral question time intervention (30:03:93) 144
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 499
Cumbria Constabulary, Performance standards 932
Potatoes, Agricultural subsidies 565-6w
Selective schools, Secondary education 144

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Questions
Administration of justice 937-8
Community charge, Administrative costs 336-7
Devolution, Scotland 308w
Local government constituencies, Scotland 318-9w
Treaty on European Union 574w

Cancer
Medical research 468w

Cann, Mr Jamie
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1047-50
Questions
Budget March 1993, Investment 369w

Cann, Mr Jamie—continued
Dept of Social Security, Postal services 170w

Capital allowances
Corporation tax 482
Enterprise zones 528w

Capital gains tax
Debts written off 143w
Tax avoidance 18-9w

Car industry
206-7w

Caravan sites
Travelling people 527w

Caravan Sites Act 1968
Questions
527w

Carbon dioxide
Nuclear power stations 160-1w

Carbon monoxide
Domestic accidents 242w

Carbon tax
950

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Motion to refer amndt to Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills (02:04:93) 804, (14:04:93) 922

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
88-9w

Care proceedings
Bradford County Court 426w

Career development loan scheme
597w

Career structure
Nurses 410w

Careless driving
166w

Carers' premium
702-3w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Calling of Members, Points of order (01:04:93) 524
Competition (14:04:93) 846
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 363, 379
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 517-8
Questions
Alternative energy 486
Assisted areas, Wales 88w
AWE Aldermaston, Contractorisation 323w
Beef, Origin marking 566w
Civil servants, Freemasonry 15
Dairy Crest 245w
Disabled workers, Local authorities 94-5w
Electromagnetic interference, Electronic equipment 209w
Employment schemes 593w
Farm incomes, Tourism 48w
Farmers, Wales 269w
Integrated administration & control system 246-7w
Integrated administration & control system, Computer privacy 246w
Llantarnam Abbey 409w
Milk Development Council 245w
Registration of births deaths & marriages, Microforms 240w
Unemployment, Llanfair Caereinion 593w
Village schools, Wales 6
Winch, Mary 200w

Carlisle, Mr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 206
Warehouse parties (01:04:93) 535-40

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
M25 (01:04:93) 641-4
Questions
A66, A1 299w
A595, Bypasses 168w
Bridges, Construction costs 167w
Cars 166w
Cycling, Crash helmets 166w
Cycling, Safety equipment 738w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Civil service manpower 357-8w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Contracts for services 358w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Motor vehicle registration 356w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Parliamentary constituencies 356-7w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Shipping registration 356w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Women 358w
Drivers Vehicles & Operators Information Technology, Privatisation 2w, 693w
Driving offences, Cellular phones 166w
Lorry drivers, Death 561w
Motor vehicle testing, Diesel engines 561-2w
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 356w
Motorway service areas 697w
Newbury bypass 167w
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 558w
Road safety, Local government departments 166w
Road works, West Cumbria 168w
Severn bridge, Road signs 558w
Transport of radioactive materials, Military vehicles 558w
Transport policy, Development plans 560w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Privatisation 560w
West Cumbria 168w

Carlisle Airport
Plutonium 716w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1062, 1067, 1074-5
Questions
Metropolitan Police 941-2

Cars
166w

Carttiss, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 250

"Case for University Colleges"
266w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 172, 178, 191, 197-8, 217, 220, 222, 224, 227, 245-7, 249-50, 255-78, 311, 313, 316-7, (15:04:93) 965-6, 974, 979, 987, 993
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 32

Cash limits
Dept of the Environment 291w
Scottish Office 152w, 317w

Castlereagh
Housing 630w

Casual workers
Dock workers 294-6w

Cellular phones
Driving offences 166w

Cenargo International
(02:04:93) 773-80

Census of population
Standard spending assessments 132-3w

Central Science Laboratory
248w
Performance standards 247w

Central Veterinary Laboratory
Performance standards 247w

Ceramic industries
Industrial diseases benefits 660w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc.
Addressing the Chair (30:03:93) 272
Amendments & new clauses (30:03:93) 160-4, 245-6, 293, (15:04:93) 959-61, 963-4, 967-9
Calls to order (30:03:93) 255, 267, (15:04:93) 988, 1002
Members' conduct (30:03:93) 223, 238, 246, 293, 296
Members' interventions (30:03:93) 223, 257, 268, 285
Points of order (30:03:93) 250, 255, 265-6, 270, 277, (15:04:93) 960-71, 975, 987, 1001
Scope of debate (30:03:93) 213, 236, 261, 265, 271, 275-7, 304, 310-1, 313, 316-8, 322

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
331w
Disabled workers 533w
Ethnic minorities 533w
Ethnic monitoring 533w
Higher civil servants 533-4w
Ministerial duties 90w
Public appointments 534w
Women 533w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Four
119w

Channel Islands
Nazi war crimes 685-6w

Channel Three
119w

Channel tunnel
Immigration controls 440w
Passengers 738w
Railway network 298w, 439w, (02:04:93) 795-802
St Pancras 439w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Questions
Council tax, Tax collection 678w
Customs & Excise, Civil service dispersal 231w
District health authorities, Expenditure 744-5w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 473-4w

Charitable donations
Hospitals 311w

Charitable trusts
NHS 22-30w

Charities
Budget March 1993 368w
VAT 488-9

Charities Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (16:04:93) 1082

Charity Commission
240-1w

Charter flights
Airports 355-6w

Charterline
15-6

Chartermark scheme
13-4, 18

Chelmsford
Housing benefits 77w

Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education
Public petitions (29:03:93) 130

Chemical Weapon Convention
159-60w

Chemical weapons
406w

Chemists shops
Merton 599-600w
Sutton 599-600w

Chessells Committee
see London Implementation Group

Chessington Computer Centre
Civil service agencies 331-2w

Chewing gum
48w

Chieftain tanks
Pakistan 122w

Child abuse
Evidence 526-7w
Local government social services 260w

Child health
602w
Physical education 602-3w

Child patients
602w

Child protection committees
Wales 260w

Child psychiatrists
Manpower 603w

Child safety
605w
Expenditure 606w

Child Support Act 1991
Debates etc.
(01:04:93) 713-27
Questions
Ethnic minorities 488w
European Charter of Rights of the Child 487-8w

Child Support Agency
303w
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 713-27

Child Support Agency for Northern Ireland
see Northern Ireland Child Support Agency

Child Support Appeals (Jurisdiction of Courts) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 413

Child support officers
Codes of practice 303w

Children
Homicide 383-4w
Hospices 364w
Nutrition & health 742w
Ophthalmic services 362w
Play 63w
Welsh language 454-6w

Children in care
Community homes (01:04:93) 529-32
Prisoners 726-8w

China
Hong Kong 818-9, 823-4
Nuclear non proliferation 687w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 375
Questions
Day care of children, Scotland 588w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm*—*continued
Dental services, Scotland 699w
Water supply industry, Scotland 309w

Chronically sick
Community care 305-6w

Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
Questions
608w

Church Commissioners
House of Commons questions 147-8w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 835
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 26, 46, 99-102, 113
Questions
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 539w
Retirement pensions, Social security reciprocal agreements 171w
Upholder class submarines, Defence procurement 720w

Citizen's Charter
13-5, 90w
Community care 18-20, 191-2w
Gypsies 534w
Handicapped 17-8
Local government services 17-8

City action teams
Expenditure 512w

City challenge
512-4w, 729w

City grants
729w

Citybus
631w
Religion 401w

Civil Aviation Authority
297-9w, 562-4w

Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions & Contributions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Civil Legal Aid (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Civil servants
Freemasonry 14-5

Civil servants' secondment
European Commission 268w, 586w, 628w
Manufacturing industries 706w
Northern Ireland Office 628w
Office of UK Permanent Representative to EC 586w

Civil service
Religion 275w

Civil service agencies
Accountability 17, (01:04:93) 525-9
Chessington Computer Centre 331-2w
Driving licences 449-50w
Government laboratories 248w
Northern Ireland 449-50w
Parliamentary questions 170w
Performance standards 16
Relocation of employees 16

Civil service dispersal
Customs & Excise 231w
Leicester 537w
Nottingham 537w
South Wales 268w

Civil service manpower
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency 357-8w
Prime Minister 377-8w
Remand Contract Unit 726w
Swansea 267w

Civil service pensions
Hong Kong 123w, 583w

Civil service recruitment
Ministry of Defence 177w
Records of achievement 532-3w, 537w

Civil service retirement
Hong Kong 234w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 50, 87-9
Questions
Wolds Remand Prison, Per capita costs 113w

Clarence Dock
Land acquisition 509-10w

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 830-1
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 497-8, 571w
Armed forces deployment, Macedonia 174-5w
Armed forces housing, Public sector housing sales 508w
Armed forces strength, Iraq 173w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Documents 570w
Falkland Islands, Journalists 571w
Gulf Trust 174w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Prisoners of war 173w
Journalists, Travel 570w
Law of war, Prosecutions 173-4w
Members' travel 570w
Yugoslavia, Armed conflict 124w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 54, 57-62

Clarke, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 66
Questions
Business questions 954
Community care, Chronically sick 305-6w
Hospital closures, Scotland 700w
Huntington's chorea, Lothian Health Board 700w

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 857-70
Questions
Bombings, Compensation 750w
Cumbria Constabulary 933
Cumbria Constabulary, Performance standards 932
Home Office, Contracts for services 619-21w, 725-6w, 749-50w, 752w
Home Office, Ethnic minorities 220w
Home Office, Ethnic monitoring 220w
Home Office, Higher civil servants 219-20w
Home Office, Private investment 382w
Home Office, Public appointments 624w
Intelligence services, Accountability 940
Life imprisonment, Codes of practice 223w
Metropolitan Police 719w, 941-3
Police, Performance standards 932-4
Police, Prisoner escorts 934
Police discipline 111-2w
Police protection, Royal family 222w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 721-2w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, Crime prevention 429w
Prison Service Agency 385w
Warehouse parties 223-4w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Documents, Points of order (31:03:93) 354
Questions
Community care, Finance 590-1w
Devolution, Scotland 340
Industrial training schemes, Lanarkshire 343-4

Class sizes
155w
Rural areas 155w
Wales 267w, 408w

Clean Air Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (16:04:93) 1082

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 428, 449-53
Questions
Budget March 1993, Environment protection 486
Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, Industrial health & safety 337w
Fire regulations 384w, 430w
Integrated administration & control system 46-7w, 109-10w, 450w
USA, Northern Ireland 686w

Clinical trials
467w

Closures
Equatorial Bank 145w
Sub post offices 208w

Clwyd
Local government reform 413w

Clyde Submarine Base
Security 325w

Coal
Imports 50w

Coal mine closures
(29:03:93) 25-125
Employment opportunities 252w
Health 185w
Per capita costs 49-50w
Wales 139w

Coal mining
(29:03:93) 25-125
Government assistance 713w
Government grants 202w
Income 52w
Industrial diseases benefits 659-61w
Industrial health & safety 212w
Wales 84w

Coal prices
Australia 50w

Coal reserves
Opencast mining 406w

Coastal areas
Nature conservation 131w
Water pollution (14:04:93) 853-6, (15:04:93) 958

Coastal Waters (Quality Standards) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (15:04:93) 958

Coastal Waters (Water Quality Standards) (Costs) Bill 1992/93 (Proposed)
Debates etc.
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (14:04:93) 853-6

Coastal zone management
EC action 131w

Coe, Mr Sebastian
Questions
Cot deaths 153

Coffey, Ms Ann
Questions
Youth services 155w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Child Support Agency (01:04:93) 713-9
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (02:04:93) 760-4, 771
Young people, Contraceptives (01:04:93) 555-6
Questions
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, Veterinary services 725w
AWE Aldermaston, Buildings 499-501w
AWE Aldermaston, Capital investment 501w
AWE Aldermaston, Decommissioning 499-500w
Computer privacy 699w
Computer privacy, Dept for Education 547-8w
Computer privacy, Dept of Employment 594w
Computer privacy, Dept of Health 605w
Computer privacy, Dept of National Heritage 688w
Computer privacy, Dept of Social Security 665w
Computer privacy, Dept of the Environment 729w
Computer privacy, Dept of Trade & Industry 704-5w
Computer privacy, Dept of Transport 738w
Computer privacy, EC action 218w
Computer privacy, EC law 217-8w
Computer privacy, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 685w
Computer privacy, Home Office 622w
Computer privacy, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 568w
Computer privacy, Ministry of Defence 571w
Computer privacy, Northern Ireland Office 733-4w
Computer privacy, Stock Exchange 218w
Computer privacy, Treasury 684w
Computer privacy, Wales 462w
Contact lenses, Eye disorders 238w
Council tax, Debt collection 514w
Defence research establishments, Testing 502w
Drug research 467w
Geneva conventions, Law of war 580-1w
Incinerators, Kineton 501-2w
Intimidation of witnesses 384-5w
Law of war, Armed forces training 571w
National insurance contributions 484
Nuclear Powered Warships Safety Committee 195w
Open government 90w
Recycling, Paper 493w
Sellafield, Decommissioning 502w
Transport of radioactive materials, Military vehicles 558w

Collins Committee
see Business & the Environment Advisory Committee

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Agricultural Training Board 327w
Hong Kong, China 823
Markets 283-5w

Comfrey
Health hazards 565w

Commercial Court
Judges 196-7w

Commission for the New Towns
289w

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Committee on Safety of Medicines
Disclosure of information 599w

Commodity agreements
Rubber 496w

Common agricultural policy
(31:03:93) 414-69
UK contributions 567w

Commonwealth of Independent States
579w
Nuclear weapons 826-8
Overseas aid 826-8

Community action
93w
21 hour rule 418w
Social security benefits 337w

Community care
Chronically sick 305-6w
Citizen's Charter 18-20, 191-2w
Codes of practice 612w
Elderly 468-9w
Finance 590-1w
Handicapped 86w
Health visitors 612w
Local government social services 612-3w
Rehabilitation 612-3w
Rehabilitation centres 612w
Scotland 305-6w, 590-1w
Single homeless 21-2w, 186w
Transitional arrangements 365-7w
Wales 411-2w

Community care grants
Refugees 169w
Smoke alarms 304w

Community charge
Administrative costs 336-7

Community councils
Wales 138w

Community health councils
Expenditure 361w

Community health services
Midwives 149w

Community homes
Children in care (01:04:93) 529-32

Community nurses
Liverpool (31:03:93) 470
Public petitions (31:03:93) 470

Community Selfbuild Agency
513w

Community service orders
Sexual offences 640w

Companies' political contributions
Public utilities 114w

Company accounts
Insurance companies 207-8w

Company law
EC action 372-3w

Company liquidations
Northern Ireland 636w
VAT registration 142w

Company taxation
EC countries 480w

Competition
Ministerial statements (14:04:93) 842-50

Complaints
Coroners 219w
Direct selling 760w
Immigration & Nationality Division 224w
Local authorities 348w

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
46w

Compulsory purchase
Brackletter 149w

Computer applications
Drug side effects 603w
School attendance 158w

Computer privacy
699w
Dept for Education 547-8w
Dept of Employment 594w
Dept of Health 605w
Dept of National Heritage 688w
Dept of Social Security 665w
Dept of the Environment 729w
Dept of Trade & Industry 704-5w
Dept of Transport 738w
EC action 218w
EC law 217-8w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 685w
Home Office 622w
Integrated administration & control system 246w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 568w
Ministry of Defence 571w
Northern Ireland Office 733-4w
Stock Exchange 218w
Treasury 684w
Wales 462w

Computers in National Health Service
Expenditure 234-5w
Wessex Regional Health Authority 608w

Concessionary fares
Pensioners 441-2w

Conditions of employment
107w
Dismissal 106w

Conferences
National Union of Teachers 946

Conpah's Quay power station
4

Conlarty, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Documents, Points of order (31:03:93) 353

Consolidated Fund
478-9w

Consolidated Fund debates
Child Support Agency (01:04:93) 713-27
Greater London (01:04:93) 584-625
Housing (01:04:93) 693-712
London Ambulance Service (01:04:93) 669-85
M25 (01:04:93) 626-44
Nuclear weapons tests (01:04:93) 645-52
Post Office (01:04:93) 653-68
Retirement age (01:04:93) 686-92
South East region (01:04:93) 584-625
Violence on television (01:04:93) 564-83

Consolidated Fund (No 3) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
(29:03:93) 128
2R* & 3R* (29:03:93) 24

Construction costs
Bridges 167w
Road construction 632w

Consultants
Dept of Employment 94w
Dockyards 505w
Export Intelligence Service 210w
Nuclear power 703w
Quality control 292w

Consumer expenditure
747w
Fuels 17w, 374w, 666w

Consumer protection
Air travel 562-4w
British Rail 359-60w
Electricity supply industry 496-7w, 717w
Trading standards departments 206w

Consumer Protection Advisory Committee
206w

Contact lenses
Eye disorders 238w

Contaminated land registers
Local government expenditure 527w
Wales 681w

Contraceptives
Sex education 351w
Young people (01:04:93) 555-6

Contractorisation
569w
AWE Aldermaston 323w

Contracts
Building Research Establishment 58w
Bus services 440w
Kuala Lumpur Airport 824-5
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 704w
Road construction 358-9w

Contracts for services
Atomic Weapons Establishment 501w, 569w
Bolton Borough Council 350w
Dept of Employment 92w
Dept of Health 236w
Dept of Social Security 169w
Dept of the Environment 282-3w
Dept of Trade & Industry 50w
Dept of Transport 1w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency 358w
Employment protection 54-5w, 91-2w, 525w, 592w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 83w
Government departments 91w, 215w, 539-40w
Home Office 222w, 619-21w, 725-6w, 749-50w, 752w
Immigration officers 726w
Jobplan workshops 335-6w
Legal aid scheme 199-200w
Local government services 54-6w
London Fire & Civil Defence Authority 723-4w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 198-200w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 109w
Ministry of Defence 325w
Police national computer 430-1w, 621-2w
Police Staff College 619-20w
Prison education services 621w, 752w
Prisoner escorts 750w
Restart programme 335-6w
Scotland 592w
Treasury 225w

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
293w
EC internal trade 293w
Wood 203w

Convictions
Cornwall 117w
Devon 117w
Industrial health & safety 255-8w
Twitchell, Keith 217w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 840
Questions
Agricultural Training Board, Secretarial staff 109w

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 39-48
Questions
Unpaid taxes, Tax collection 747w

Cookers
Temporary accommodation 58w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 107-8
Questions
Hong Kong, China 818

Coombs, Mr Anthony—continued
Iraq, Human rights 686w
Police, Performance standards 933-4
Squatting, Law reform 217w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Business questions 507
District health authorities, Public appointments 364w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys, Disclosure of information 239w

Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte
619-20w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John, Paymaster-General
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 277, 278-83
Questions
Customs & Excise, Civil service dispersal 231w
EC Finance Council, Voting behaviour 19-20w
Football Trust, Football pools 375w
Indirect taxation 224-6w
Norther Ireland Customs & Excise Commissioners, Religion 372w
Paymaster Agency 20w
Research finance, EC framework programme 684w
Treasury, Ethnic minorities 370-1w
Treasury, Ethnic monitoring 371-2w
Treasury, Higher civil servants 372w
Treasury, Investment income 478w
VAT 142w
VAT, Domestic energy consumption 367w
VAT, EC internal trade 367w
VAT, Electricity consumption 537w
VAT, Energy prices 749w
VAT, Fuels 142w
VAT, Tax administration 19w
VAT, Tax yields 141-2w
VAT registration 228-30w
VAT registration, Company liquidations 142w
VAT zero rating 477w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Violence, Television (01:04:93) 575-8
Questions
Arts Council, Arts finance 691w
Iran, Terrorism 486w
Regional arts boards 531w
Regional arts boards, Arts finance 691w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 166-7, 186, 200, 211, 213, 236, 238-43, 266, 269, 272, 274, 295, 299, 303, 310, 322
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (02:04:93) 765-8, 770-1
South East region (01:04:93) 588, 592, 602, 605, 608-12, 616, 622
Questions
Admissibility of evidence, Video recordings 382w
Asthma, Medical research 470w
Bus services, Contracts 440w
Buses, Road traffic 440w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 439w
Cot deaths 671w
European cooperative longterm initiative in defence, UK contributions 322w
Family health services authorities, Greater London 365w
Gas fuels, Housing & elderly 715w
Homelessness, Greater London 515-6w
Housing benefits, Administrative costs 668w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 667-8w
Immigration applications, Marriage 382w
Israel, Nuclear weapons 580w
London Buses, Investment 691-2w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy—continued
London Regional Transport, Government grants 441w
Mordechai, Vanunu 580w
Nuclear non proliferation 379w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 507w
Nuclear power stations, Security industry 759w
Political refugees, Somalia 621-2w
Railway safety, Barking 440w
Retirement pensions, Expenditure 664w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits uprating 664w
Retirement pensions, Social security recipients 663-4w
Somalia, Political refugees 583-4w
Standing charges 715w
VAT, Energy prices 749w
Western Sahara, Referenda 485w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 837
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 179, 193-6, (15:04:93) 982-4
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 30, 52, 58, 109
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 498
Business questions 507, 950

Cornwall
Convictions 117w
Physical education 157w

Coroners
Complaints 219w

Corporal punishment
Schools 154w, 353w
United Arab Emirates 233w

Corporation tax
483
Capital allowances 482
Tax burden 482
Tax rates & bands 481-2

Cost per pupil
Assisted places scheme 684-5w
Educational publications 150
Northern Ireland 640w
Nursery schools 437w
Primary education 348, 437w
Wales 6

Cot deaths
153, 671w

Council house sales
345-6w

Council housing
Empty housing 150w
Exservicemen 57w
Housing construction 531w
Repairs & maintenance 386w
Scotland 386w

Council of Ministers
486-7w

Council tax
154, 293w
Basildon 496
Debt collection 514w
Handicapped 58w
Lambeth 53w
Residential care 203w, 288-9w, 675w
Scotland 151w
Strathclyde 335-6
Tax collection 678w
Timesharing 151w
Transitional relief 87w, 131w
Valuation 20w, 346w
Wales 87w, 462-4w
Wellingborough 493

Council tax benefits
419-20w

Council tax capping
350w

Council tenants
Local government social services 682w
Wales 682w

Counselling
Mental patients 180w

Countryside stewardship scheme
518w

County Hall
Property transfer 730w

Court of Auditors
(30:03:93) 160-327

Courts
Information 525w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia (01:04:93) 648
Post Office (01:04:93) 653-65, 668
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Cost per pupil 684-5w
Direct mail 555w
Insolvency practitioners, Regulatory system 494-5w
Insurance companies, Company accounts 207-8w
Insurance companies, Insolvency 207-8w
Iraq, Overseas students 582w
Laboratories, Government contracts 715w
Post Office, Management consultants 762w
Postal services, Balance of payments 762w
Postal services, EC action 554w
Research finance, EC framework programme 684w
Sequestration of assets, Iraq 683w
Sub post offices, Closures 208w
Yugoslavia, Armed conflict 944

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Kashmir (01:04:93) 540-3
South East region (01:04:93) 604
Questions
Chemists' shops, Merton 599-600w
Foreign investment in UK, Greater London 554w
Homelessness, Greater London 529w
Housing construction, Greater London 530-1w
Small businesses, Greater London 554w
Sri Lanka, Diplomatic service 685w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison visits 724-5w

Craft industries
Government assistance 385w
Scotland 385w

Crafts Council
385w

Crash helmets
Cycling 166w
Sikhs (01:04:93) 548-50

Cream
Food hygiene 589w
Scotland 589w

Credit
Bank of England 478-9w, 749w
EC countries 478w
National Loans Fund 478-9w
Treaty on European Union 478w

Crewe Health Authority
(02:04:93) 744-52

Crewe-Holyhead railway line
84w

Cricket
Work permits 338w

Crime
Greater London 940-1
Newtownabbey 396-7w
Police authorities 756-60w

Crime Concern
220-1w

Crime prevention
719w
Domestic violence 221w
Greater London 941
Motor vehicle theft 356w
North West region 220-1w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 429w

Criminal investigation
Forensic science 429w

Criminal Justice Act 1991
Questions
Magistrates 426w, 937

Criminal Justice Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R & Money res* (14:04:93) 857-923

Criminal proceedings
Crown courts 425-6w

Crossrail
Cost effectiveness 1w
Railway safety 1w

Crossrail Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

Crown courts
Criminal proceedings 425-6w
Video recordings 526-7w

Croydon
Road works 167w

Croydon Health Authority
Mental health services 466w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Calling of Members, Points of order (01:04:93) 524
Civil service agencies, Points of order (31:03:93) 353-4
Competition (14:04:93) 850
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 857
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 269-70, 276, 293, (15:04:93) 984
House of Commons questions, Points of order (14:04:93) 852
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 367
Lobbying, Points of order (29:03:93) 23
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 34
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 518, 522
Questions
British Rail, Occupational pensions 2-3w
Business questions 957
Chartermark scheme 18
Food poisoning, Inquiries 181-2w
Industrial health & safety, Convictions 255-8w
Local government staff, Freemasonry 514w
Salmonella 182w
Small businesses, Legislation 485-6

Cumbernauld Development Corporation
M80 319w

Cumbria Constabulary
933
Performance standards 932

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
Extracurricular activities, Fees & charges 155w

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 55, 74-6

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Questions
Special education 156-7w

Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 161-2, 170, 179, 181-93, (15:04:93) 959-60, 961, 970-6
Questions
A595, Bypasses 168w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 821
Bridges, Construction costs 167w
EC external relations 814
Road works, West Cumbria 168w
West Cumbria 168w

Curriculum
Administrative costs 150
Codes of practice 543w
English education 545w
Religious education 153-4w

Curriculum Council for Wales
415w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 834
Questions
Low incomes 303w

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State for Agriculture
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 426, 460-5
Whales, Nature conservation (02:04:93) 807-10
Questions
Agricultural subsidies 453w
Agricultural Training Board, Secretarial staff 109w
Agriculture, Environment protection 451w
Agriculture, Public expenditure 49w
Basking sharks, Fish conservation 49w
Basking sharks, Fishing catches 49w
Beef, Intervention stocks 567w
Common agricultural policy, UK contributions 567w
Dairy Crest 245w
Environment protection, Expenditure 567w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Expenditure 452-3w
Farm incomes, Tourism 48w
Farmers, Departmental forms 568w
Group Marketing Grant 326w
Integrated administration & control system 46-7w, 109-10w, 246-7w, 450w, 454w
Integrated administration & control system, Computer privacy 246w
Milk Development Council 245w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Computer privacy 568w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Contracts for services 109w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Ethnic minorities 244w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Ethnic monitoring 244-5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Higher civil servants 245-6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Management consultants 48w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Private investment 326w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Public appointments 566-7w
Oil pollution control 327w, 568w
Potatoes, Agricultural subsidies 565-6w
Set-aside schemes 564w
Set-aside schemes, Weedkillers 564w
Transport of animals 326w

Customs & Excise
142w, 203w, 372w, 687w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 374w
Civil service dispersal 231w

Cycleways
Greater London 442w

Cycling
Crash helmets 166w
Safety equipment 738w

Cyprus
Peace negotiations 583w

Cystic fibrosis
178w

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Questions
Domestic energy conservation, Housing & elderly 284w
Ecolabelling, Paper 212-4w
Industrial development, West Wales 10-1
Medical research, Housing & elderly 284w
THORP, Investment returns 50w
Zimbabwe, Droughts 117-8w

Dairy Crest
245w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Coastal Waters (Water Quality Standards) (Costs), Motion to introduce Bill negatived (14:04:93) 855
Competition (14:04:93) 849
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 863, 908-10
Transplant of Human Organs Bill, 1R (30:03:93) 158-9
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Customs & Excise 374w
Bletchley Park Trust, Museums & galleries 52w
Business questions 955
Falkland Islands, Military discipline 15w
Forestry, International organisations 128w
Local government reform, Scotland 307w
Malaysia, Rain forests 825
Metropolitan Police, Falkland Islands 104w
MV Havkong, Shipping accidents 149w
Pollution monitoring, Shetland 393w
Recycling 716-7w
Recycling, Bottles 716w
Recycling, Plastics 717w
Wood, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 203w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 892
Questions
Bank of England, Annual reports 479w
Bank of England, Banking supervision 373w

Data Protection Act 1984
Questions
462w, 547-8w, 568w, 571w, 594w, 605w, 622w, 665w, 684-5w, 688w, 699w, 704 5w, 729w, 733-4w, 738w

Davidson, Mr Ian
Questions
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 321w
Local government reform, Employment protection 584w
Local government reform, Scotland 584-5w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 350

Davies, Mr Bryan
Questions
Business questions 506
Selective schools 149

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 306
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 69-71
Questions
Assisted areas, Llanelli 4-5

Davies, Mr Quentin
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 975

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 110-4
Questions
Badgers, Pest control 110w, 138w, 245w, 268-9w
Badgers, Scotland 148w, 313w
Class sizes, Wales 408w
Grant maintained schools, Wales 88w
Schools, Capital investment 414-6w
Unemployment, Wales 2
Welsh Development Agency, Environment protection 136w
Welsh Development Agency, Finance 3-4
Welsh Development Agency, Public appointments 136-7w
Wood, Overseas trade 161w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
British citizenship, Hong Kong 104w
Educational finance, Birmingham City Council 436w
Industrial noise, Prohibition notices 341-2w

Dawat-e-Hadiyah Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
3R* (30:03:93) 139

Dawat-e-Hadiyah (England) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
3R* (30:03:93) 139

Day care of children
Scotland 588w

Day Committee
see School Teachers' Review Body

Day nurseries
Greater London 598w

Day surgery
84w

Deaf
War pensions 740w

Death
Hospital waiting lists 605w
Lorry drivers 561w
Mattoo, Hamida 583w
Mentally ill 363w
Northern Ireland 628w
Terrorism 635-6w

Death rate
Health authorities 471-2w
Wessex Regional Health Authority 471-2w

Debt collection
Council tax 514w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 631w
Overseas students 582w

Debts written off
Capital gains tax 143w
Developing countries 144w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 760-1w
Inheritance tax 143w

Deeside
345
Housing problems 138w

Defence contracts
Ammunition 324w
Jasmin plc 504w
Strategic defence initiative 177w

Defence equipment
Surpluses 323w

Defence expenditure
Falkland Islands 685w

Defence land
Blood sports 11w
Gun sports 14-5w

Defence procurement
Helicopter carriers 16w, 321w, 570w
HMS Fort Victoria 720w

Defence procurement*—*continued
Upholder class submarines 720w

Defence Research Agency
572-4w

Defence research establishments
Testing 502w

Democracy
Peru 824

Demolition
Planning permission 514-5w

Denham, Mr John
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1015, 1063, 1065-8
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 72
Questions
Wessex Regional Health Authority, Audit 184-6w

Denmark
Treaty on European Union 123-4w, 817-8

Dental services
Edinburgh 153w
Elderly 468w
NHS 240w
Scotland 699w
Wales 265w

Dentistry
Hospitals 153w

Dentists
Manpower 264-6w
Wales 264-6w

Departmental correspondence
Administrative delays 573w
Northern Ireland Office 656w
Wessex Regional Health Authority 608w

Departmental forms
Farmers 568w

Departmental leaflets
Further education 541-2w
Sheep scab 46w

Departmental publications
Energy policy 404w
Welsh Office 541w

Departmental records
570w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 716w

Dept for Education
Computer privacy 547-8w
Disabled workers 216w
Ethnic minorities 216w
Ethnic monitoring 216w
Higher civil servants 216w
Private investment 351w
Public appointments 551w
Women 216w

Dept of Employment
478w
Computer privacy 594w
Consultants 94w
Contracts for services 92w
Ethnic monitoring 251w
Government contracts 92w
Higher civil servants 250-1w
Management consultants 92w
Public appointments 593w
Women 251w

Dept of Health
Computer privacy 605w
Contracts for services 236w
Disabled workers 178w
Ethnic minorities 178w
Ethnic monitoring 178-80w
Government contracts 178w
Higher civil servants 178-80w
Management consultants 178w
Offices 32w

Dept of Health*—*continued
Private investment 365-6w
Public appointments 466-7w

Dept of National Heritage
Computer privacy 688w
Ethnic minorities 119w
Higher civil servants 118-9w
Private investment 483w
Public appointments 481w
Women 119w

Dept of Social Security
170w, (01:04:93) 713-27, 728-34
Computer privacy 665w
Contracts for services 169w
Government contracts 416w
Management consultants 416w
Postal services 170w
Private investment 421w
Public appointments 661w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Repetitive strain injury 75-6w

Dept of the Environment
Cash limits 291w
Computer privacy 729w
Contracts for services 282-3w
Ethnic monitoring 277-8w
Government contracts 346-7w
Higher civil servants 278w
Management consultants 346-7w
Private investment 519w
Public appointments 729w
Women 277-8w

Dept of the Registers of Scotland
Performance standards 316w

Dept of Trade & Industry
703w, 706w
Computer privacy 704-5w
Contracts for services 50w
Economic regions 552-3w
Environmental policy 705-6w
Ethnic monitoring 158-60w
Government contracts 706-12w
Higher civil servants 158w, 160w
Management consultants 706-12w
Public appointments 705w
Relocation of employees 761w
Women 158-60w

Dept of Transport
Computer privacy 738w
Contracts for services 1w
Disabled workers 294w
Environmental policy 692-3w
Ethnic minorities 294w
Ethnic monitoring 294w
Higher civil servants 294w
Private investment 355w
Public appointments 560w
Women 294w

Derbyshire
Dioxins 290-1w

Deregulation initiative
485

Deva, Mr Nirj Joseph
Questions
Air force, Radio engineering 173w
Charterline 15
South Africa, Elections 575w

Developing countries
Debts written off 144w
EC external relations (14:04:93) 922

Development areas
Alyn & Deeside 11

Development plans
South East region 130w
Transport policy 560w

Deviance & behaviour disorders
(02:04:93) 753-9

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 906

Devolution
Scotland 308w, 339-40
Wales 5

Devon
Convictions 117w
Structure plans 531-2w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Questions
Consumer expenditure, Fuels 17w, 374w
Fuels, Heating 52w
Indirect taxation 224-6w
Means tested benefits 301-2w
Means tested benefits, Pensioners 416-7w
Means tested benefits, Social security recipients 417-8w
National insurance benefits 74w
National insurance contributions, Earnings limits 168-9w, 302w
National insurance contributions, Self-employed 168w
Personal tax allowances 17-8w
Personal taxation 140-1w
Social security & taxation, Marginal tax rates 302w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Performance standards 300-1w
Social security recipients, Energy prices 666w
Taxpayers 473-7w
VAT, Fuels 142w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 239, 241
Questions
Pre-school education 156w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 826

Diesel engines
560w
Motor vehicle testing 561-2w

Dietary supplements
EC action 122w

Dioxins
351w
Derbyshire 290-1w

Diplomatic service
EC countries 378-9w
Manufacturing industries 234w
Sri Lanka 685w
Trade promotion 123w
United Arab Emirates 83w
USA 485w

Dir91/542/EEC
560w

Dir92/50/EEC
536w

Direct labour departments
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 398-400w

Direct mail
555w

Direct selling
206w, 552w
Complaints 760w
Manpower 403w

Director General of Electricity Supply
see Office of Electricity Regulation

Director General of Fair Trading
see Office of Fair Trading

Director General of Telecommunications
see Office of Telecommunications

Director of Passenger Rail Franchising
162-3w, 562w

Director of Public Prosecutions
200-1w

Directors
Family health services authorities 465w
Health authorities 465w

Directors*—*continued
United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service 111w

Disability (Grants) Bill 1992/93
Questions
420w, 488w

Disability living allowance
Administrative delays 300w, 490-1w
Medical records 300w, 490w
Social security appeals 489w
Social security claims 490-1w
Warrington 76w

Disability working allowance
416-8w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
Questions
Local government expenditure 264w
Wales 264w

Disabled workers
Attorney General 344-5w
Cabinet Office 129w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533w
Dept for Education 216w
Dept of Health 178w
Dept of Transport 294w
Home Office 220w
Local authorities 94-5w
Lord Advocate 697-8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 244w
Northern Ireland Office 394w
Privy Council 360w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 146w
Training 105w
Treasury 370-1w

Disclosure of information
Committee on Safety of Medicines 599w
Immigration controls 626w
Medicines Control Agency 599w
Ministerial policy advisors 330-1w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 239w
Water supply 676-7w

Discrimination
Gaelic Athletic Association 638-9w

Disease control
Sheep scab 46w

Dismissal
Conditions of employment 106w
School governors 156w

District councils
642-56w

District health authorities
35-6w
Expenditure 744-5w
Management consultants 409w
Public appointments 364w
Wales 409w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 321
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 65

Dobson, Mr Frank
Questions
Dept of Employment, Consultants 94w
Employment schemes, Per capita costs 598w

Dock labour scheme
294-7w

Dock workers
295-7w
Casual workers 294-6w

Dockyards
Consultants 505w
Emergency planning 505w

Doctors
Hepatitis 31-2w

Documents
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 570w

Dogs
Injuries 219w

Domestic accidents
Carbon monoxide 242w

Domestic appliances
Gas safety 731w
Private rented housing 131-2w, 731w

Domestic energy conservation
Housing & elderly 284w

Domestic energy consumption
VAT 367w

Domestic rents
678-9w

Domestic violence
102-3w
Arrests 222w
Crime prevention 221w

Donaldson Inquiry
see MV Braer Inquiry

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Questions
Telephones, Nuisance 349

***Dorrell, Mr Stephen**, Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 961-2
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax harmonisation 370w
Banks, Tax yields 142-3w
Budget March 1993, Charities 368w
Budget March 1993, VAT 370w
Business expansion scheme, Rent increases 438w
Capital gains tax, Tax avoidance 18-9w
Company law, EC action 372-3w
Company taxation, EC countries 480w
Corporation tax 483
Corporation tax, Capital allowances 482
Corporation tax, Tax burden 482
Corporation tax, Tax rates & bands 481-2
Economic growth, Unemployment 368-9w
Energy prices 491-2
Finance (No 2) Bill 1992/93 438w
Foreign investment in UK 482-3
Income tax 375-6w
Inheritance tax, Access to countryside 227-8w
Inheritance tax, Debts written off 143w
Inheritance tax, Tax allowances 226-7w
Inland Revenue, Electronic funds transfer 374w
Lloyd's of London, Tax allowances 229w
National insurance contributions 234w
Overseas investment, Income tax on investment incomes 226w
Personal tax allowances 17-8w, 230w
Personal taxation 140-1w
Personal taxation, Foreigners 19w
Petroleum revenue tax, Tax reform 19w, 746-8w
Religion, Inland Revenue 372w
Tax burden, Unemployed 369w
Taxation, Invalidity benefits 480w
Taxpayers 473-7w
Taxpayers, Personal records 748w
Unpaid taxes, Tax collection 747w
VAT 368w
VAT, Charities 488-9
VAT, Fuels 489-91
VAT, Tax yields 368w

***Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office*
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 362-71, 373

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James*—*continued
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 587-8w
Council housing, Repairs & maintenance 386w
Grant maintained schools, Scotland 305w
Legal aid scheme, Scotland 319-20w
Local government constituencies, Scotland 318-9w
Local government reform, Ayrshire 348
M80, Cumbernauld Development Corporation 319w
Motor vehicle theft, Strathclyde 309w
MV Havkong, Shipping accidents 149w
Obscenity, Sentencing 700-2w
Offshore safety, Procurators fiscal 590w
Parliamentary constituencies, Scotland 312-3w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 348
Prison sentences, Women 151-2w
Prison visitors, Greenock 701w
Public bodies, Accountability 307w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Scotland 586w
Railway transport, Inverclyde 338
Railway transport, Rural areas 338
River Clyde, Dredging 591-2w
River Forth, Bridges 342
Road construction, Fife 341-2
School buildings, Gordon 307w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 348-9
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council 316w
Scottish Homes 150w
Smoke alarms, Scotland 320w
Telephones, Nuisance 349
Village schools, Borders region 347
Village schools, Expenditure 348

Dovelands School Leicester
(15:04:93) 1002-10

Dover
Unemployment 336

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Finance 210-1w
Consultants, Quality control 292w
Dental services, NHS 240w
Income support, Pensioner premium 421w
Land reclamation 60w
Opencast mining, Coal reserves 406w
Opencast mining, Private investment 405-6w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 59w

Dowd, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1050, 1052-3, 1071-4
South East region (01:04:93) 588-9, 590-4
Questions
Adult education, Greater London 431w
AIDS, Bromley 186-7w
AIDS support grant, London boroughs 613-4w
Air pollution control, Greater London 673w
Bus services, Passengers 558-9w
Bus services, Privatisation 559w
Buses, Greater London 559w
Channel tunnel, Immigration controls 440w
Channel tunnel, Passengers 738w
Citizen's Charter 90w
County Hall, Property transfer 730w
Cycleways, Greater London 442w
Day nurseries, Greater London 598w
East London river crossing 560-1w
Emergency planning, Greater London 622w
Employment level, Greater London 342w
Employment opportunities, Greater London 342w
Environment protection, Greater London 678w
European central bank, Greater London 479-80w
Exhaust emissions, Buses 529w, 560w
Grant maintained schools, Greater Manchester 552w

Dowd, Mr Jim—continued
Heathrow Airport, Air traffic 693-4w
Heathrow Airport, Passengers 694w
Homelessness, Greater London 677w
Housing investment programmes, Greater London 673w
Local government, Greater London 513w
Local government reform, Greater London 135w
London airports, Air traffic 694w
London Ambulance Service 600w
London Ambulance Service, Out-patients 600w
London Marathon, Fees & charges 481w
London Residuary Body 729-30w
London Residuary Body, Operating costs 730w
Olympic Games, Greater London 349-50w
Pedestrian areas, Greater London 693w
Political refugees, Greater London 752w
Pre-school education, Greater London 543-4w
Public sector housing, Housing construction 677-8w
Public transport, Greater London 556w
Railway stations, Railway workers 442w
Railway travel, South East region 558w
River Thames, Water transport 559-60w
Road construction, Inner city areas 673-4w
Road traffic, Greater London 556w
Road works, Greater London 557-8w
Royal parks, Management 481-2w
Traffic noise, Greater London 442w
Transport policy, Greater London 694w
Travel cards, Greater London 442w

Downe Hospital
Hospital doctors 62w

Down's syndrome
Special education 87w
Wales 87w, 261-2w

Dredging
409w
River Clyde 591-2w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
Civil service manpower 357-8w
Contracts for services 358w
Motor vehicle registration 356w
Parliamentary constituencies 356-7w
Public petitions (29:03:93) 129
Shipping registration 356w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre
Women 358w

Drivers Vehicles & Operators Information Technology
Privatisation 2w, 693w

Driving licences
Civil service agencies 449-50w

Driving offences
Cellular phones 166w

Droughts
Zimbabwe 117-8w

Drug abuse
Residential care 471w
Social services 470w

Drug crimes
(14:04:93) 857-923
Prisoners 615w

Drug hazards
600-1w

Drug rehabilitation centres
470-1w, 611-2w

Drug research
467w

Drug side effects
Azapropazone 179w
Computer applications 603w

Drugs
Licensing 599w, 605w

Dual carriageways
A1 587-8w
A75 350-2

Duncan Smith, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Burma (30:03:93) 329-31
Local government services (16:04:93) 1044-7, 1052
Questions
Drivers Vehicles & Operators Information Technology, Privatisation 2w

Dundee
Accident & emergency departments 150-1w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 520
Questions
Grammar schools, Kent 149
National Union of Students 155
Royal Parks Agency 354w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 165, 171, 221
Mid Cheshire Hospital NHS Trust (02:04:93) 744-50
Questions
Family income, Energy prices 477w
National insurance contributions, Tax yields 169w

Durant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 500
Foreign investment in UK 482-3

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 166, 186, 267-8

Dyslexia
141-2
Grant maintained schools 141

Eagle, Ms Angela
Questions
Commonwealth of Independent States, Overseas aid 826-8
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 428-9w

Ealing
Housing associations 129w

Earnings limits
National insurance contributions 168-9w, 302w

East Anglia
Business start-up scheme 93w
Small businesses 19w
Workstart 93w

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

East London river crossing
560-1w

East Midlands
RECHAR 498-9w
Severe hardship provision 495

Easter
Recess motions (01:04:93) 525-63

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Dental services, Elderly 468w

EC accession
Norway 581w

EC action
Coastal zone management 131w
Company law 372-3w

EC action—continued
Computer-privacy 218w
Dietary supplements 122w
Goat meat (29:03:93) 125
Hazardous wastes 292w
Import of live animals 749w
Multinational companies 108w
Postal services 554w
Sheep meat (29:03:93) 125
Sugar (14:04:93) 922

EC Agriculture Council
486-7w

EC Cohesion Fund
(29:03:93) 125, 165w
EC environmental policy 206w

EC Commission
see European Commission

EC Committee of the Regions
Scotland 306w

EC Cons Doc 9910/92
(14:04:93) 922

EC Cons Doc 4439/93
(14:04:93) 922

EC countries
Company taxation 480w
Credit 478w
Diplomatic service 378-9w
Food hygiene 182w
Hospital patients 362w

EC Draft 4307/93
(29:03:93) 125

EC Draft 4436/93
(29:03:93) 125

EC Draft 4439/93
(14:04:93) 922

EC Draft 4608/93
(31:03:93) 414-69

EC Energy Council
486-7w

EC Environment Council
486-7w
Voting behaviour 532w

EC environmental policy
EC Cohesion Fund 206w

EC external relations
813-4
Developing countries (14:04:93) 922
South Africa 822

EC external trade
Malta 493w

EC Finance Council
486-7w
Voting behaviour 19-20w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
486-7w

EC framework programme
535w
Research finance 684w

EC grants & loans
Belfast Airport 639w
Education 158w
Employment 252w
Greater London 207w
Industry 87w
Ports 165w
Science & technology research 535w
Vocational training 735w
Wales 84-5w, 87w, 137w

EC institutions
Fraud 948

EC Internal Market Council
486-7w

EC internal trade
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 293w

***EC internal trade**—continued*
VAT 367w

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
486-7w, 661w, 737-8w

EC law
Air pollution 532w
Computer privacy 217-8w
European Court of Justice 377w
Government contracts 536w
Hazardous wastes 517-8w
Housing associations 675w
Nuclear safeguards 208w
Public contracts 553w
Water pollution 522-4w

EC regional policy
Environment protection 497-8w

EC Research Council
486-7w

EC Social Charter
(30:03:93) 160-327, 950, (15:04:93) 959-1001

EC Transport Council
Voting behaviour 2w

Ecolabelling
Paper 212-4w

Economic & monetary union
145w

Economic & Social Committee
UK delegations 124w

Economic & Social Research Council
91w

Economic analysis
Economic forecasting 371w

Economic forecasting
536-8w
Economic analysis 371w

Economic growth
Unemployment 368-9w

Economic situation
370w
Wales 84w

Edinburgh
Dental services 153w

Edinburgh Summit
122w

Edinburgh University Dental School
153w

Education
EC grants & loans 158w

Education Act 1944
Questions
547w

Education & industry
156w

Education (Grant Maintained Schools) (Finance) (Amendment) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

Education (Grant Maintained Schools) (Finance) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

Educational assessment
English education 215w, 947-8
Primary education 145-6
Prisoners 724w
Schools & parents 268w
Somerset 151
Special education 151
Wales 268w

Educational finance
Birmingham City Council 436w
Northern Ireland 640w

***Educational finance**—continued*
Standard spending assessments 548-52w
Wales 6

Educational publications
Cost per pupil 150

Educational standards
148
Mathematics education 142
Primary education 157-8w
Secondary education 509w
Teaching methods 64w

Efficiency scrutinies
416w

***Eggar, Mr Tim**, Minister for Energy*
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 82
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Finance 210-1w
British Coal Corporation, Government assistance 713w
British Nuclear Fuels, UK companies abroad 705w
Coal, Imports 50w
Coal mine closures, Per capita costs 49-50w
Coal mining, Government assistance 713w
Coal mining, Income 52w
Coal mining, Industrial health & safety 212w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Computer privacy 704-5w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Contracts for services 50w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Environmental policy 705-6w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Ethnic monitoring 158-60w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Higher civil servants 158w, 160w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Management consultants 706-12w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Public appointments 705w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Relocation of employees 761w
EC Cohesion Fund, EC environmental policy 206w
EC regional policy, Environment protection 497-8w
Electricity Act 1989 717w
Electricity distribution, France 50-1w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 494w
Electricity interconnectors, Republic of Ireland 716w
Electricity supply industry 494w
Electricity supply industry, Consumer protection 496-7w, 717w
Electricity supply industry, Licensing 51w
Electromagnetic interference, Electronic equipment 209w
Energy Advisory Panel 403w
Energy policy, Departmental publications 404w
Energy prices, VAT 211w
Energy research, Research finance 206w
Energy review, Magnox reactors 713w
Fuel cells, Finance 209w
Fuels, Heating 52w
Gas fuels, Housing & elderly 715w
Global technology partnership 679-80w
Hazardous wastes, Exports 61w
Laboratories, Government contracts 715w
Manufacturing industries, Civil servants' secondment 706w
Mixed oxide fuel 718w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 404w
Nuclear Electric, Performance standards 493-4w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Magnox reactors 704w
Nuclear power 703-4w, 759w
Nuclear power, Consultants 703w
Nuclear power, Costs 704w
Nuclear power, Energy policy 51w
Nuclear power stations, Inspections 497w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive waste disposal 717-8w

***Eggar, Mr Tim**—continued*
Nuclear power stations, Security industry 759w
Nuclear safeguards, EC law 208w
Official engagements 762w
Opencast mining, Coal reserves 406w
Opencast mining, Private investment 405-6w
Petroleum exploration 497w
Petroleum production 497w
Power stations, Energy conservation 713w
Pressurised water reactors, Nuclear safety 703w
Private investment, Northern Ireland Office 404w
Recycling 716-7w
Recycling, Bottles 716w
Recycling, Paper 493w
Recycling, Plastics 717w
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 761-2w
Sellafield, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 680w
Sizewell B 703w
Standards specifications, Environment protection 498w
Standing charges 715w
THORP 50w
THORP, Investment returns 50w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 716w
Tyres, Waste disposal 498-9w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Privatisation 405w
Wind power 208w

Egypt
Overseas aid 465w
Religious discrimination 540w
WENA Hotels 540w

Elderly
Community care 468-9w
Dental services 468w
Health services 467-8w
Housing benefits 74-5w
Income support 74-5w, 491-2w
Medical examinations 411w, 599w
Wales 460w

Election expenses
Addresses to the Crown (15:04:93) 931

Elections
South Africa 575w

Electorate
Newbury 34-6w

Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board
Health & Safety Executive 334w
Privatisation 334w

Electricity
Housing & elderly 715w

Electricity Act 1989
Questions
51w, 717-8w

Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
Questions
Industrial health & safety 337w

Electricity consumption
VAT 537w

Electricity distribution
France 50-1w

Electricity generation
Nuclear power 494w

Electricity interconnectors
(29:03:93) 25-125
Republic of Ireland 716w

Electricity supply industry
494w
Consumer protection 496-7w, 717w
Licensing 51w
Northern Ireland 274w

Electricity tariffs
Northern Ireland 274-5w

Electromagnetic interference
Electronic equipment 209w

Electronic equipment
Electromagnetic interference 209w
Testing 209w

Electronic funds transfer
Inland Revenue 374w

Elgin
Telephone systems 349

Elletson, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 838
Local government services (16:04:93) 1045
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 577w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rape 576w
Judges, Administration of justice 429-30w

Emergency planning
Dockyards 505w
Greater London 622w
London Fire & Civil Defence Authority 622w

Emergency services
Greater London 469w
Helicopters 469w

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 963, 971, 987-8

Emphysema
659-61w
Industrial diseases 76-7w
Industrial injuries scheme 492-3w

Employment
EC grants & loans 252w

Employment action
594-5w

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland 61-2w, 657-8w
Northern Ireland Electricity 61w
Private companies 657-8w

Employment level
Greater London 342w

Employment opportunities
Business start-up scheme 93w
Coal mine closures 252w
Greater London 342w
Local government reform 634w
Londonderry 655w
North Wales 406-7w

Employment policy
45w

Employment protection
Contracts for services 54-5w, 91-2w, 525w, 592w
Local government reform 584w
Part-time employment 108-9w
Prison staff 111w
United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service 111w

Employment schemes
593-4w, 596-7w
Per capita costs 594-5w, 598w
Travelling expenses 596-7w
Workstart 93w

Employment training
594-5w, 598w

Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force
675w

Empty housing
Armed forces housing 572w
Council housing 150w
Scotland 150w

Energy Advisory Panel
403w

Energy conservation
Power stations 713w

Energy costs
NHS 469w
Staffordshire Ambulance Service 469w

Energy policy
Departmental publications 404w
Ministers' visits abroad 405w
Nuclear power 51w

Energy prices
491-2
Family income 477w
Handicapped 665w
Invalid care allowances 702-3w
Lone parents 665w
Pensioners 421w
Price increases 946-7
Social security recipients 76-7w, 666w
VAT 76w, 211w, 395w, 421w, 665w, 702-3w, 749w

Energy research
Research finance 206w

Energy review
51-2w, 703-4w, 49-50w
Magnox reactors 713w
Nuclear power 704w

Energy Saving Trust
511w

Engineering industries
Balance of payments 948
Manufactured imports 948

English education
Curriculum 545w
Educational assessment 215w, 947-8

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

Enright, Mr Derek
Questions
Police authorities, Public appointments 721w

Enterprise Ulster
Religion 633w

Enterprise zones
528-9w
Capital allowances 528w
Inverclyde 308-9w
Non-domestic rates 528w

Environment protection
Agriculture 451w
Budget March 1993 486-7
Cabinet papers 464w
EC regional policy 497-8w
Expenditure 567w
Greater London 678w
India 347-8w
Non-governmental organisations 152-3w
Pesticides 328w
Scotland 152-3w
Standards specifications 498w
Textile industry 498w
Welsh Development Agency 136w
Women 54w

Environment Select Committee
Forestry 678w

Environmental Action Fund
54w

Environmental audit
498w

Environmental policy
44-5w
Dept of Trade & Industry 705-6w
Dept of Transport 692-3w
Ministerial duties 538w

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
511w

Environmentally sensitive areas
Expenditure 452-3w

Equal opportunities
Broadcasting Act 1990 119w
Vocational training 594w

Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland
633-4w

Equatorial Bank
Closures 145w

Ernst & Young
17w, 48w, 78-81w, 92w, 114-8w, 176w, 178w, 346-7w, 416w, 704w, 706-13w

Essex
Boundary Commission for England 104w
Grant maintained schools 154w

Estate partnership scheme
Sealand Estate 266w

Etherington, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 846
Questions
Handicap benefits, Medical appeal tribunals 421-2w
Social security claims, Mucous membrane disease 422w

Ethnic minorities
Attorney General 344-5w
Cabinet Office 129w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533w
Child Support Act 1991 488w
Dept for Education 216w
Dept of Health 178w
Dept of National Heritage 119w
Dept of Transport 294w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 121w
Government grants to local authorities 96w
Health services 235w
Home Office 220w
Lord Advocate 697-8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 244w
Northern Ireland Office 394w
Prisoners 616w
Privy Council 360w
Recorders 343w
Treasury 370-1w

Ethnic monitoring
Attorney General 344w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533w
Dept for Education 216w
Dept of Employment 251w
Dept of Health 178-80w
Dept of the Environment 277-8w
Dept of Trade & Industry 158-60w
Dept of Transport 294w
Home Office 220w
Lord Advocate 697w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 244-5w
Ministry of Defence 323-4w
Northern Ireland Office 394w
Privy Council 360w
Treasury 371-2w
Welsh Office 262w

European Bank for Reconstruction & Development
see European Development Bank

European central bank
Greater London 479-80w

European Charter of Rights of the Child
Child Support Act 1991 487-8w

European Commission
109-10w, (30:03:93) 160-327
Civil servants' secondment 268w, 586w, 628w

European Communities
576w

European Communities (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Com (30:03:93) 160-327, (15:04:93) 959-1001
Questions
505, 951

European cooperative longterm initiative in defence
UK contributions 322w

European Court of Justice
126-8w
EC law 377w

European Development Bank
812, 948

European investment funds
536w

European Monetary Institute
536w

European Parliament
(30:03:93) 160-327

European Parliament constituencies
383w, 936-7

European Regional Development Fund
137w, 158w, 207w, 252w, 639w

European Year of Safety Hygiene & Health Protection
341-2w

European Year of the Elderly
307w, 743w

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Arab boycott 579w
Public expenditure, Scotland 306-7w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 133-5w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 78-81

Evans, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 383
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 516
Questions
Hill livestock allowances, Wales 410-1w
Local government reform, South Wales 9-10
Sleeping rough, Wales 412w
Unemployment, Wales 3
Valleys initiative 85w

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (02:04:93) 796-7
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (02:04:93) 761, 766
Questions
British Rail, Consumer protection 359-60w
Council tax benefits 419-20w
Criminal Justice Act 1991, Magistrates 937
Grant maintained schools 154w
VAT 488

Evans, Mr Roger
Questions
Deregulation initiative 485
Group Marketing Grant 326w
National Union of Teachers, Conferences 946
Police, Gwent 7-8

Evans Committee
see Curriculum Council for Wales

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Police, Performance standards 932-3

Evidence
Admissibility of evidence 623w
Child abuse 526-7w

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Questions
Economic & Social Committee, UK delegations 124w
Scottish Assembly 340

Exchange rate mechanism
Sterling 369w

Exhaust emissions
Buses 529w, 560w

Exhibitions
Upper Waiting Hall 463w

Export Credits Guarantee Department
Debts written off 760-1w
Privatisation 760-1w

Export Group for the Constructional Industries
496w

Export Intelligence Service
Consultants 210w
Pre Link 760w

Exports
369-70w
Government assistance 487
Hazardous wastes 61w

Exservicemen
Council housing 57w
Housing 508-9w
Nuclear weapons tests 539w

Extracurricular activities
Fees & charges 155w

Eye disorders
Contact lenses 238w

Faber, Mr David
Questions
Government laboratories, Civil service agencies 248w
Pesticides Safety Directorate 247-8w
Police, Wiltshire 722w

Fabricant, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 522
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Local government services 17-8
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 11-2
GCE AS level 143-4

Factories
Welsh Development Agency 259w

Factory Inspectorate
341-2w

Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland
Manpower 633-4w

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976
Questions
61-2w

Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland
657-8w
Religion 627w

Fair Isle Straits
Fishing grounds 587w

Fair Trading Act 1973
Questions
206w

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 226, 278
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 367, 369, 371-2, 373, 376

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas—continued
Questions
Village schools, Expenditure 348

Falkland Islands
Defence expenditure 685w
Journalists 571w
Members' visits abroad 571w
Metropolitan Police 104w
Military discipline 15w
Petroleum exploration 380-1w
Sovereignty 381w

Family doctors
Alternative medicine 31w
Medical audit 606w
Pay 681-2w
Prescription drugs 669-70w
Prescriptions 598w
Preventive medicine 29-30w
Wales 411w, 681-2w

Family expenditure survey
18w, 225w

Family health services authorities
Directors 465w
Greater London 365w

Family income
Energy prices 477w

Family size
594w

Farm Animal Welfare Council
48-9w

Farm incomes
Tourism 48w

Farmers
Departmental forms 568w
Suicide 250w
Wales 250w, 269w

Farms
Mink 541w, 564w, 590w, 657w

Farriers
499-500w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 843-4
Questions
Beer, Measurement 50w
Health service staff, Bus services 171w
Royal Armouries, Leeds 119w

Female circumcision
603w

Fences
Water & sewerage companies 673w

Ferries
Licensing 298w
Spain (02:04:93) 773-80

Fertility
Medical treatments 745-6w
Scotland 745-6w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Arachnoiditis, Back pain (14:04:93) 924-6
Questions
Child Support Agency 303w
Child support officers, Codes of practice 303w
Ministerial policy advisors, Disclosure of information 330-1w
School governors, Dismissal 156w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 838
Questions
City action teams, Expenditure 512w
Enterprise zones 528-9w
Enterprise zones, Capital allowances 528w
Pensioners, Personal income 662w

Fife
Road construction 341-2

Film industry
152-3

Finance (No 2) Bill 1992/93
Questions
438w, 953-4

Fines
383w, 943-4

Fire engines
723-4w

Fire prevention
Public sector housing 413w
Wales 413w

Fire regulations
384w, 430w

Fire services
Motor vehicles 383w

Firearms certificates
Northern Ireland 449w

Fires
Rented housing 623-4w

Fireworks
Injuries 404-5w

First aid
179w

First time buyers
674w

Firth of Clyde
387w

Fish conservation
Basking sharks 49w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Charterline 15-6

Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland
Religion 633w

Fishing catches
Basking sharks 49w
Lobsters 274w

Fishing crews
Public order offences 152-4

Fishing grounds
Fair Isle straits 587w
Oil pollution 587w

Flexibus
401w, 631w

Flood control
Research 12-3

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 521-2
Questions
Business questions 510
Carbon dioxide, Nuclear power stations 160-1w
Chemical Weapon Convention 159-60w
Chemical weapons 406w
Educational assessment, Special education 151
Hip replacements 607w
Knee replacements 743w
Local government reform, Wales 85w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 46w
Nuclear test ban 46w
Nuclear weapons tests 203w
Orthopaedics, Surgery 743w
Parliamentary questions, Civil service agencies 170w
Public appointments, Handicapped 89w
Radon gas, Health hazards 39w, 90w, 520-1w

Flynn, Mr Paul—continued
South Africa, Nuclear weapons 45w
South Africa, Nuclear weapons tests 45w
VAT, Fuels 489-90

Food additives
Minerals 47-8w

Food hygiene
Cream 589w
EC countries 182w

Food poisoning
Inquiries 181-2w

Football pools
Football Trust 373w

Football Trust
Football pools 373w

Footwear
VAT 31w

Ford Motor Company
206-7w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Computer privacy 685w
Contracts for services 83w
Ethnic minorities 121w
Government contracts 78-81w
Higher civil servants 120-1w
Management consultants 78-81w
Private investment 379-80w
Public appointments 581w
Women 121w

Foreign companies in UK
Wales 2

Foreign investment in UK
481-3, 490
Greater London 554w
Hong Kong 524w
Japan 459w
Northern Ireland 628-9w, 637-8w, 642-8w
Scotland 524w
Wales 1-2, 11-2, 85w

Foreign policy
Indonesia 122w
Russia 574w, (02:04:93) 781-7
Singapore 575w

Foreign relations
France 812-3
Japan 576w
Kenya 579w
Malaysia 824-5
Russia 811
South Africa 811-2
South Korea 822-3

Foreigners
Personal taxation 19w

Forensic science
Criminal investigation 429w

Forest Enterprise
390-3w, 586w

Forest protection
588w
Rain forests 360w

Forestry
148w
Environment Select Committee 678w
International organisations 128w

Forestry Commission
586w, 588w
Blood sports 589w
Land acquisition 390-3w

Forestry Review Group
148w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 737-8w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Employment
Questions
Conditions of employment 107w
Dept of Employment, Consultants 94w

Forsyth, Mr Michael—continued
Dept of Employment, Contracts for services 92w
Dept of Employment, Management consultants 92w
Disabled workers, Local authorities 94-5w
Disabled workers, Training 105w
Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board, Health & Safety Executive 334w
Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board, Privatisation 334w
Employment, EC grants & loans 252w
Employment protection, Contracts for services 91-2w
European Year of Safety Hygiene & Health Protection 341-2w
Multinational companies, EC action 108w
Part-time employment, Employment protection 108-9w
Unfair dismissal 107w
Young people, Training 735w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Assisted places scheme 66-74w
Assisted places scheme, Cost per pupil 684-5w
Assisted places scheme, School fees 431-5w
Class sizes 155w
Class sizes, Rural areas 155w
Corporal punishment, Schools 154w, 353w
Curriculum, Codes of practice 543w
Dept for Education, Private investment 351w
Dyslexia 141-2
Educational finance, Birmingham City Council 436w
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 548-52w
Educational standards 148
Educational standards, Primary education 157-8w
Educational standards, Teaching methods 64w
English education, Educational assessment 215w
Extracurricular activities, Fees & charges 155w
Grammar schools, Kent 149
Grant maintained schools 154w
Grant maintained schools, Dyslexia 141
Grant maintained schools, Essex 154w
Grant maintained schools, Greater Manchester 552w
Grant maintained schools, School population 65-6w
Languages education, Primary education 65w
Nursery schools, Cost per pupil 437w
Physical education, Cornwall 157w
Physical education, Primary education 353w
Pre-school education 140-1, 156w
Pre-school education, Greater London 543-4w
Pre-school education, School population 140
Pupil exclusions 547w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 551w
Religious education, Curriculum 153-4w
School administration, Local government reform 543w
School attendance, Computer applications 158w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 154-5w
School governors, Dismissal 156w
Schools, Race relations 157w
Selective schools 144-5, 149
Selective schools, Secondary education 144
Sex education, Contraceptives 351w
Single sex schools, School population 157w
Special education 156-7w
Standard assessment tasks 157w
Testbourne School, Grant maintained schools 351w

Forth, Mr Eric—continued
Truancy 551w

Fossil fuel levy
404w

Foster, Mr Don
Questions
Grant maintained schools 150-1
School administration, Local government reform 543w

Foulkes, Mr George
Questions
Armed forces, Belize 175w
Armed forces deployment, Belize 15w
Army bases, Ministry of Defence police 508w
Belize, Armed forces deployment 83w
Clyde Submarine Base, Security 325w
Local government reform, Ayrshire 348
Scottish health boards 309w
VAT, Tax burden 487-8

Foundry industry
290-1w

Fox, Dr Liam
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 235
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 399
Questions
Army Base Repair Organisation 193-4w
Employment opportunities, Coal mine closures 252w

France
Business 495-6w
Electricity distribution 50-1w
Foreign relations 812-3
Ministers' visits abroad 304w

Francis House
364w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Legal profession, Student grants (01:04:93) 532-5
Questions
Council tax, Lambeth 53w
Housing associations, EC law 675w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 511w
Legal aid scheme, Contracts for services 200w
Mental patients 613w
Sudan, Human rights 577w
Taxpayers, Personal records 748w
Youth unemployment 592w

Fraud
EC institutions 948
Jurisdiction (14:04:93) 857-923

Freeman, Mr Roger, Minister for Public Transport
Questions
British Rail, Consumer protection 359-60w
British Rail, Investment 555-6w
British Rail, Management 3w
British Rail, Occupational pensions 2-3w, 359w, 697w
British Rail, Privatisation 3-5w, 162-3w
Channel tunnel, Immigration controls 440w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 298w, 439w
Concessionary fares, Pensioners 441-2w
Heathrow Airport, Railway network 165w
Preserved railways, Railways Bill 1992/93 696w
Railway fares, Travel cards 696w
Railway freight transport, Government grants 695w
Railway freight transport, Privatisation 696w
Railway Heritage Trust 696w
Railway land, Land ownership & tenure 4w
Railway network, Private investment 695w

Freeman, Mr Roger—continued
Railway safety, Barking 440w
Railway stations, Railway workers 442w
Railway track, Repairs & maintenance 299w
Railway travel, Public service obligation grant 562w
Railway travel, South East region 558w
Red Star, Privatisation 3w
Traffic Commissioners, Road traffic control 691w
Transport infrastructure, Private investment 5w
Transport police 694-5w

Freemasonry
Civil servants 14-5
Local government staff 514w

French, Mr Douglas
Debates etc.
Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education, Public petitions (29:03:93) 130
Questions
Evidence, Admissibility of evidence 623w
Evidence, Child abuse 526-7w
Teachers, Local education authorities 545-7w

Friesland School
147

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 838
Questions
Council tax, Wellingborough 493
European Parliament constituencies 383w

Fuel cells
Finance 209w

Fuels
Consumer expenditure 17w, 374w, 666w
Heating 52w
VAT 142w, 187w, 367w, 479-81, 487-91

Further education
Departmental leaflets 541-2w
Staff-student ratios 352w

Further education colleges
Land acquisition 217w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Questions
Agency nurses, Professional qualifications 585w
Bone marrow disorders, Transplant surgery 585w
Budget March 1993, VAT 370w
Maternity services, Scotland 341
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, Health service staff 588w

Gaelic Athletic Association
Discrimination 638-9w

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Questions
Access to countryside, Fees & charges 586-7w
Acute beds, Hospital admissions 311-2w
Ambulance services, Paramedical staff 309-10w
Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board, Privatisation 334w
Environment protection, Non-governmental organisations 152-3w
European Year of Safety Hygiene & Health Protection 341-2w
Fertility, Medical treatments 745-6w
Hospital ancillary staff, Manpower 309w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Violence, Television (01:04:93) 571-4
Questions
Civil service agencies, Performance standards 16

Gale, Mr Roger—continued
Sellafield, Radioactive waste disposal 531w

Gallie, Mr Phil
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 860
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 111
Questions
Council tax, Strathclyde 336
Historic Scotland, Performance standards 589w
Japan, Foreign relations 576w
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency, Performance standards 314w
Scottish Prison Service 314-5w

Gapes, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 840
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 179, 230-8
Questions
Local Education Business Partnerships, Training & enterprise councils 428w
Local government borrowing 293w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Government grants 427-8w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Local Education Business Partnerships 436w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Manpower 428w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Public appointments 429w
Pesticides, Environment protection 328w
Training & enterprise councils, Expenditure 427w
Unitary development plans, Greater London 130w

Gardiner, Sir George
Questions
Sunday trading 722w

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Business questions intervention (15:04:93) 957
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 227, 228, 229, 234, 294, 297-302, 305, 306, 307, 315, 316, (15:04:93) 972, 975-6
Questions
Belize, Armed forces deployment 83w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 814
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 577-8w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rape 576w
Channel Islands, Nazi war crimes 685-6w
China, Nuclear non proliferation 687w
Council of Ministers 486-7w
Cyprus, Peace negotiations 583w
Dietary supplements, EC action 122w
EC external relations 813-4
Economic & Social Committee, UK delegations 124w
European Communities 576w
Falkland Islands, Defence expenditure 685w
Falkland Islands, Petroleum exploration 380-1w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Public appointments 581w
France, Foreign relations 812-3
Geneva conventions, Law of war 580-1w
Hong Kong, Civil service pensions 583w
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 582w
Iraq, Overseas students 582w
Iraq, Petroleum 582w
Israel, Human rights 580w
North Korea, Nuclear safeguards 583w
Norway, EC accession 581w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Nuclear non proliferation 581-2w
Nuclear test ban 580w

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan—continued
Occupied territories, Israel 579-80w
Peru, Democracy 824
St Helena, Motor vehicles 581w
Somalia, Immigration applications 484-5w
South Korea, Human rights 484w
South Korea, Ministers' visits abroad 484w
Treaty on European Union 574w
Treaty on European Union, Denmark 123-4w, 817-8
United Arab Emirates, Diplomatic service 83w
USA, Diplomatic service 485w
USA, GATT 821-2
Yugoslavia, Armed conflict 814-5

Garnier, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Burma (30:03:93) 330
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 890-2, 912
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 206
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 378, 389-94

Garrett, Mr John
Questions
Business questions 952
Water pollution, Norfolk 59w

Gas fuels
Housing & elderly 715w

Gas safety
593w
Domestic appliances 731w
Holiday accommodation 342-3w

Gases
Tipping of waste 276w

GATT
USA 821-2

Gatwick Airport
694w

Gaza strip
579-80w

GCE AS level
143-4

General certificate of secondary education
Social sciences education 154w

General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
Manpower 627w
Religion 671w

Genetic engineering
Animal experiments 103-4w

Geneva conventions
Law of war 580-1w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
Military aircraft, USA 195w

Geriatrics
Hospital beds 410w
Wales 410w

Germany
Incinerators 674w
Recycling 716w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
South East region (01:04:93) 584-90, 605
Questions
In vitro fertilisation, Waltham Forest 236w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Questions
Beef, Intervention stocks 567w
Secure accommodation 720-1w

Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Questions
Mathematics education, Educational standards 142

Glasgow Evening Times
325w

Glen Parva Youth Custody Centre
720w

Global positioning system
324w

Global technology partnership
679-80w

Gloucestershire
Unemployment 251-2w

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Manpower 222-3w

Goat meat
EC action (29:03:93) 125

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia (01:04:93) 645-9
Post Office (01:04:93) 653
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Armed forces housing 321-2w
Business questions 510
Community care grants, Smoke alarms 304w
Contracts for services, Employment protection 592w
Departmental correspondence, Administrative delays 573w
European Court of Justice 126-8w
European Court of Justice, EC law 377w
Hazardous wastes, EC action 292w
Legal aid scheme, Scotland 319-20w
Offshore safety, Procurators fiscal 590w
Ports, Greenock 63-4w
Prison sentences, Women 151-2w
Prison visitors, Greenock 701w
River Clyde, Dredging 591-2w
Severe hardship provision, Young people 488-9w
Sewage, Waste disposal 387w
Smoke alarms, Scotland 320w
University finance, Scotland 344-5
Water pollution, EC law 522-4w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 592w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 577w
Yugoslavia, War crimes 494

Golding, Mrs Llin
Debates etc.
London Ambulance Service (01:04:93) 679
Retirement age (01:04:93) 689
Questions
Industrial diseases benefits, Ceramic industries 660w

Goode Committee
see Pension Law Review Committee

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Burma (30:03:93) 332-4
Questions
Cambodia, Armed conflict 83w
Diplomatic service, Manufacturing industries 234w
Diplomatic service, Trade promotion 123w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Contracts for services 83w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Ethnic minorities 121w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Higher civil servants 120-1w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Management consultants 78-81w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Private investment 379-80w
Hong Kong, China 818-9, 823-4
Hong Kong, Civil service pensions 123w
Hong Kong, Civil service retirement 234w
Indonesia, Foreign policy 122w
Japan, Foreign relations 576w
Malaysia, Foreign relations 824-5
Malaysia, Rain forests 825

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair—continued
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, North Korea 685w
Singapore, Foreign policy 575w
South Korea, Foreign relations 822-3
South Korea, Ministers' visits abroad 687w

Gordon
School buildings 307w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Questions
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 490-1w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 256, 258, 273
Questions
Cost per pupil, Northern Ireland 640w
Educational finance, Standard spending assessments 548-52w
Grant maintained schools, School population 65-6w
Police authorities, Budgeting 934-5
Public sector housing, Government grants 278-82w
Telephones, Nuisance 349
Tenants' choice 282w

Gosport
Armed forces civilians 505w
Armed forces strength 505w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 965

Government assistance to industry
Northern Ireland 629w, 631w, 647-56w

Government Chemist
715w

Government contracts
Dept of Employment 92w
Dept of Health 178w
Dept of Social Security 416w
Dept of the Environment 346-7w
Dept of Trade & Industry 706-12w
EC law 536w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 78-81w
Home Office 114-8w
Laboratories 715w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 48w
Ministry of Defence 176w
Treasury 17w

Government departments
Contracts for services 91w, 215w, 539-40w

Government grants to local authorities
Ethnic minorities 96w
Urban programme 133-5w

Government laboratories
Civil service agencies 248w

Government Property Lawyers Agency
16-7w

Government securities
230-1w

GP fundholders
236-7w, 606-7w
Medical audit 606w
Prescription drugs 669-70w
Wales 6-7

Graduates
Unemployment 106w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 368-9
Ministerial powers, Points of order (31:03:93) 355
Questions
Enterprise zones, Inverclyde 308-9w

***Graham, Mr Thomas**—continued*
Railway transport, Inverclyde 338

Grammar schools
Kent 149

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
A45, Bourn (16:04:93) 1083-5, 1088
Questions
Administration of justice 938
Driving offences, Cellular phones 166w
Grant maintained schools 147-8
Road safety, Local government departments 166w

Grant maintained schools
147-8, 150-1, 154w
Amber Valley 150
Dyslexia 141
Essex 154w
Greater Manchester 552w
School population 65-6w, 146-7
Scotland 305w
Testbourne School 351w
Wales 88w

Grants for education support & training
220-1w

Greater Glasgow Health Board
Huntingtons chorea 700w

Greater London
Adult education 431w
Air pollution 529w
Air pollution control 673w
Bus services 1-2w, 440w, 558-9w
Buses 559w
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 584-625
Crime 940-1
Crime prevention 941
Cycleways 442w
Day nurseries 598w
EC grants & loans 207w
Emergency planning 622w
Emergency services 469w
Employment level 342w
Employment opportunities 342w
Environment protection 678w
European central bank 479-80w
Family health services authorities 365w
Foreign investment in UK 554w
Home energy efficiency scheme 283w
Homelessness 515-6w, 529w, 677w
Housing construction 530-1w
Housing investment programmes 673w
Local government 513w
Local government reform 135w
Olympic Games 349-50w
Pedestrian areas 693w
Political refugees 752w
Pre-school education 543-4w
Primary health care 33w
Priority routes 2w
Public transport 556w
Railway stations 442w
Road traffic 555-6w
Road traffic control 355w
Road works 557-8w
Sleeping rough 530w
Small businesses 554w
Traffic noise 442w
Transport policy 694w
Travel cards 442w
Unitary development plans 130w

Greater London Council
135w

Greater Manchester
Grant maintained schools 552w
Offenders 95-6w
Offensive weapons 113w

Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

Greenock
Ports 63-4w
Prison visitors 701w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 502-3
Building Research Establishment, Contracts 58w
Civil service agencies, Relocation of employees 16
House of Commons catering, Access to parliament 463w
Housing associations, Ealing 129w
Housing insulation, Building regulations 57w
Metropolitan Police, Horses 725w
Official engagements 129w, 377w, 688w
Pensioners, Energy prices 421w
Prison education services, Contracts for services 752w
Prisoners, Educational assessment 724w
Road traffic, Greater London 555-6w
Science & technology, Publicity 91w
Selective schools 144
Standard assessment tasks 157w
Young offenders, Prison education services 724w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 438, 443-7
Questions
Energy prices 491-2
Police, Performance standards 932-3

Greenwich
Police 935

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Questions
Air travel, Consumer protection 562-4w
Banks, Tax yields 142-3w
Consumer protection, Trading standards departments 206w
Direct selling 206w, 552w
Direct selling, Complaints 760w
Direct selling, Manpower 403w
Inheritance tax, Debts written off 143w
Local government reform, Scotland 307w
Tipping of waste 133w
VAT registration, Company liquidations 142w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 576w
Civil service dispersal, South Wales 268w
Civil service manpower, Swansea 267w
Class sizes 155w
Class sizes, Wales 267w
Community councils, Wales 138w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Civil service manpower 357-8w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Contracts for services 358w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Motor vehicle registration 356w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Parliamentary constituencies 356-7w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, Shipping registration 356w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre, Women 358w
Educational assessment, Schools & parents 268w
Languages education, Primary education 65w, 266w
Local government constituencies, Vale of Glamorgan 8-9
Primary education, Educational assessment 146
Tax burden, Unemployed 369w
Unemployment, South Wales 408w

Grimsby & Scunthorpe Health Authority
Public appointments 187w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Questions
Management consultants 324-5w
Management consultants, Expenditure 194w
REME static workshops 193w

Group Marketing Grant
326w

"Growing a Green Economy"
657w

Grylls, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
M25 (01:04:93) 629, 634-8, 639, 644
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 28
Questions
Company law, EC action 372-3w
Company taxation, EC countries 480w
Health service staff, Pay 366w
NHS, Managers 471-2w
NHS administration, Manpower 39-44w
Public contracts, EC law 553w
South Africa, Politics & government 575w
VAT, EC internal trade 367w

Guard dogs
Prisons 722-3w

Guatemala
Armed forces 175w

Guinness
Legal aid 6w

Gulf Trust
174w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 414-22, 424-5, 428-9, 448
Questions
Agricultural Training Board 327w
Central Science Laboratory, Performance standards 247w
Central Veterinary Laboratory, Performance standards 247w
Government laboratories, Civil service agencies 248w
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 450w
Integrated administration & control system 110w
Livestock, Auctions 451-2w
Pesticides Safety Directorate 247-8w
Sheep dipping, Organophosphorous pesticides 328-30w
Slaughterhouses, Inspections 248-50w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Performance standards 244w

Gun sports
Defence land 14-5w

Gunnell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 840-1
Questions
Hospices, NHS finance 470w

Gwent
Bees 88w
Police 7-8

Gwynedd
Unemployment 1-2

Gypsies
Citizen's Charter 534w

Habitual offenders
617w
Young offenders 938-9

Hackney
Regional planning & development 729w

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 114
Second Chamber (Reform) Bill, 1R (31:03:93) 357-9
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 520-1
Questions
Business questions 510

Hain, Mr Peter—continued
Local government reform, Wales 5
South Africa, EC external relations 822

Hall, Mr Mike
Questions
Disability living allowance, Warrington 76w

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Debates etc.
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia (01:04:93) 649-52
Questions
Air force bases, Sea rescue 506w
Ammunition, Uranium 193w
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 508w, 571w
Armed forces, Belize 175w
Armed forces, Blood sports 11-4w
Armed forces, Pigeons 177w
Armed forces deployment 506w
Armed forces deployment, Belize 15w
Armed forces deployment, Macedonia 174-5w
Armed forces deployment, United Arab Emirates 15w
Armed forces discharges, Armed forces housing 321-2w
Armed forces discharges, Scotland 572w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 572w
Armed forces housing, Housing associations 60-1w
Armed forces housing, Housing trusts 195w
Armed forces housing, Property transfer 176w
Armed forces housing, Public sector housing sales 508w, 569-70w
Armed forces housing, Shared ownership schemes 175-6w, 326w
Armed forces officers, Social class 504w
Armed forces strength, Gosport 505w
Armed forces strength, Iraq 173w
Armed forces training, United Arab Emirates 15w
Army Base Repair Organisation 193-4w
Army bases, Ministry of Defence police 508w
Army in Northern Ireland, Pay incentives 325w
Clyde Submarine Base, Security 325w
Defence land, Blood sports 11w
Defence land, Gun sports 14-5w
Exservicemen, Housing 508-9w
Falkland Islands, Journalists 571w
Falkland Islands, Military discipline 15w
Global positioning system 324w
Gulf Trust 174w
HMS Ark Royal, Armed forces deployment 720w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Prisoners of war 173w
Journalists, Travel 570w
Law of war, Armed forces training 571w
Law of war, Prosecutions 173-4w
Low flying 502-4w
Members' travel 570w
Military aircraft, USA 195w
Military exercises, South Korea 324w
Ministry of Defence, Civil service recruitment 177w
Ministry of Defence, Computer privacy 571w
Ministry of Defence, Private investment 322w
Ministry of Defence, Public appointments 506w
Navy, Redundancy 321w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 507w
Nuclear Powered Warships Safety Committee 195w
Nuclear submarines, Persian Gulf 569w
Nuclear weapons, Transport of radioactive materials 322-3w
RAF Leuchars, Sea rescue 506-7w
REME static workshops 193w
Strategic defence initiative, USA 177w

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie—continued
University Air Squadron 507w
Weapons, Iraq 508w

Hamilton, Mr Neil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Debates etc.
Competition, Ministerial statements (14:04:93) 842-50
Questions
Insolvency practitioners, Regulatory system 494-5w
Insurance companies, Company accounts 207-8w
Insurance companies, Insolvency 207-8w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 44, 53, 67, 74, 88, 105-6

Handicap benefits
Medical appeal tribunals 421-2w
Northern region 421-2w

Handicapped
Citizen's Charter 17-8
Community care 86w
Council tax 58w
Energy prices 665w
Local government social services 608w
Prison visitors 701w
Public appointments 89w
Wales 86w

Handicapped students
Student grants 64w
Universities 63-4w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Belfast City Hospital, Hospital doctors 62w
Cost per pupil, Northern Ireland 640w
Downe Hospital, Hospital doctors 62w
Gaelic Athletic Association, Discrimination 638-9w
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 449w
Infant mortality, Northern Ireland 627w
Invalidity benefits, Northern Ireland 632w
Livestock, Auctions 449w
Lobsters, Fishing catches 274w
Maps, Northern Ireland 657w
Medical research, Myalgic encephalomyelitis 641w
Mink, Farms 657w
Northern Ireland Child Support Agency 672w
Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, Manpower 402w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards, Pay incentives 276w
Old people's homes, Per capita costs 636-7w
Potatoes, Northern Ireland 443-8w, 655-6w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Northern Ireland 641w
Religion, Enterprise Ulster 633w
Religion, Northern Ireland health & social services boards 447-9w
Religion, Queen's University Belfast 401w
Religion, Youth Council for Northern Ireland 401w
Social Fund, Finance 671-2w
Social security benefits, Prisoners' dependants 629-30w
Sports Council for Northern Ireland 633-4w
Student grants, Northern Ireland 638w
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 734w
Students, Housing benefits 642w
Ulster Museum, Attendance 402w
University finance, Northern Ireland 656-8w

Hannam, Sir John
Questions
Business questions 950

Hanson, Mr David
Questions
Business questions 955-6
Coal mining, Wales 84w
Income support, Social security benefits rates 418w
Lorry drivers, Death 561w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 31, 107
Questions
Educational publications, Cost per pupil 150
English education, Educational assessment 947-8

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Questions
Objects in lieu of tax 233w

Harlow
496

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Public finance 229w, 480w
Public sector borrowing requirement 480w
VAT, Fuels 488

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 436-9, 462-3
Fisheries, Points of order (29:03:93) 21
Questions
Fishing crews, Public order offences 153-4

Harvey, Mr Nick
Questions
Armed forces pensions 539w
British Rail, Privatisation 162-3w
Gas safety 593w
Gas safety, Holiday accommodation 342-3w
Sittings of the House Select Committee 463w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Questions
Charter flights, Airports 355-6w
Government contracts, EC law 536w

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Questions
Science budget 12-3

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Questions
Young offenders 939

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Questions
Interception of Communications Commissioner, Annual reports 203-4w
Security Service Commissioner, Annual reports 203w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Privatisation 405w

Haysham power station
759w

Hazardous materials
Imports 511w

Hazardous wastes
EC action 292w
EC law 517-8w
Exports 61w
Imports 89w, 136w, 285w, 292w, 351w
Radio programmes 277w
ReChem International 89w
Wales 413-4w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Questions
Technical education 149-50
VAT, Small businesses 370w

Health
Coal mine closures 185w
Heating 187w

Health & Safety Executive
Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board 334w

Health authorities
Death rate 471-2w
Directors 465w

Health hazards
Comfrey 565w
Radon gas 39w, 90w, 520-1w

Health physics
Telecommunications technology 670w

Health service staff
Bus services 171w
Leeds 171w
Pay 366w, 471-2w, 605w
Pay settlements 320w
Scotland 320w, 588w
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 588w
Women 236w

Health services
Elderly 467-8w
Ethnic minorities 235w
Fees & charges 468w
Mentally Disordered Offenders Services Review 466w

Health visitors
Community care 612w
Security 612w

Health warnings
Alcohol advertising 364w

Heart diseases
Hospital waiting lists 32w
Surgery 181w, 409w
Wales 409w

Heathrow Airport
694w
Air traffic 693-4w
Passengers 694w
Railway network 165w

Heating
Fuels 52w
Health 187w

Hedgerow incentive scheme
60w, 135w

Helicopter carriers
154
Defence procurement 16w, 321w, 570w

Helicopters
Emergency services 469w
Rescue services 299w, 556w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1014, 1018-25, 1078-80
Questions
Council tax 293w
Traffic Commissioners, Road traffic control 691w

Hendry, Mr Charles
Questions
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 195-6w
Listed buildings, Buxton 731-2w
Warehouse parties, High Peak 494-5

Hepatitis
604w
Compensation 32w
Doctors 31-2w
Maelor Hospital 87w, 259w
Screening 31w, 87w, 259w
Vaccination 32w
Water supply disconnections 457w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, President of the Board of Trade
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 25-39, 40, 42, 50-1, 112

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Questions
Aerospace industry, Government grants 404w
Aerospace industry, Innovation 554w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Departmental records 716w
Assisted areas 496w
Assisted areas, Portsmouth 205w
Car industry 206-7w
EC grants & loans, Greater London 207w
Energy policy, Ministers' visits abroad 405w
Foreign investment in UK, Greater London 554w
Manufacturing planning & implementation scheme 51-2w
One stop shop initiative 714-5w
Small businesses, Greater London 554w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 209-10w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Airports, Airlines 355w
European Parliament constituencies 936

Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Questions
VAT, Fuels 480

High Peak
Warehouse parties 494-5

Higher civil servants
Attorney General 345-6w
Cabinet Office 45w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533-4w
Dept for Education 216w
Dept of Employment 250-1w
Dept of Health 178-80w
Dept of National Heritage 118-9w
Dept of the Environment 278w
Dept of Trade & Industry 158w, 160w
Dept of Transport 294w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 120-1w
Home Office 219-20w
Lord Advocate 698w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 245-6w
Ministry of Defence 323w, 500w, 572-4w
Northern Ireland Office 394-6w
Office of Public Service & Science 533-4w
Privy Council 360w
Treasury 372w
Welsh Office 262-3w

Higher education
436w
Staff-student ratios 352w
Tuition fees 216-7w, 436w

Higher Education Funding Council for England
63-4w

Higher Education Funding Council for Scotland
see Scottish Higher Education Funding Council

Hill, Mr Keith
Questions
Railway travel, Public service obligation grant 562w

Hill farming
Wales 268w

Hill livestock allowances
Marginal land 449-50w, 457-8w, 521-2w
Northern Ireland 449w
Scotland 521-2w
Wales 410-1w, 457-8w

Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry
373w

Hinchingbrooke School
147

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Community care, Transitional arrangements 365-7w
Social security benefits, Residential care 423-4w

Hip replacements
607w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
689-90w

Historic Scotland
Performance standards 589w

Historical Monuments of England Royal Commission
689-90w

HIV infection
Government grants 186-7w

HM Factory Inspectorate
see Factory Inspectorate

HM Land Registry
see Land Registry Office

HMS Ark Royal
Armed forces deployment 720w

HMS Fort Victoria
Defence procurement 720w

HMS Heron
14w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Questions
Physical education, Primary education 353w

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Iraq (02:04:93) 741-3
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (02:04:93) 768-72
Russia (02:04:93) 785-7
Questions
Arab boycott 579w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 576w, 819-21, 826
Commonwealth of Independent States 579w
Commonwealth of Independent States, Overseas aid 826-8
Human rights, International conferences 380w
International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Nuclear weapons 740w
Iran, Terrorism 486w, 575w
Iraq, Human rights 486w
Israel, Peace negotiations 815-7
Know-how Fund 812
Lithuania, Know-how Fund 812
Middle East, Nuclear weapons 740-1w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 573-4w
North Korea, Nuclear safeguards 484w
North Korea, Nuclear weapons deployment 122w
Nuclear non proliferation 379w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 485w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Russia 741w
Russia, Foreign policy 574w
Russia, Foreign relations 811
Serbia, Sanctions 825-6
South Africa, Nuclear weapons 233w
South Korea, US bases 484w
Sudan, Armed forces deployment 741w
Sudan, Human rights 577w
United Arab Emirates, Corporal punishment 233w
United Nations 577w
Western Sahara, Referenda 485w
Yugoslavia, Armed conflict 124w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 577w, 826

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
EC Committee of the Regions, Scotland 306w
Fishing grounds, Oil pollution 587w

Hogg, Mr Norman—continued
M80, Cumbernauld Development Corporation 319w
Oil pollution control 568w
Unemployment, Dover 336

Holiday accommodation
Gas safety 342-3w

Holidays
688-90w

Home Affairs Select Committee
(29:03:93) 131-8, 492, 940

Home energy efficiency scheme
283-4w, 348w, 527-8w
Greater London 283w

Home insulation scheme
527-8w

Home Office
621w, 941-2
Computer privacy 622w
Contracts for services 222w, 619-21w, 725-6w, 749-50w, 752w
Disabled workers 220w
Ethnic minorities 220w
Ethnic monitoring 220w
Government contracts 114-8w
Higher civil servants 219-20w
Management consultants 114-8w
Private investment 382w
Public appointments 624w
Women 220w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 263, 271
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 587-8w
HMS Ark Royal, Armed forces deployment 720w
HMS Fort Victoria, Defence procurement 720w
River Forth, Bridges 342

Homelessness
Greater London 515-6w, 529w, 677w
Housing associations 273w
Local government expenditure 529w
Night shelters 132w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 273w
Temporary accommodation 132w

Homicide
Children 383-4w
Life imprisonment 734-6w

Hong Kong
British citizenship 104w
China 818-9, 823-4
Civil service pensions 123w, 583w
Civil service retirement 234w
Foreign investment in UK 524w
Scottish Enterprise 393w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Local government finance, Strathclyde 346
Mixed oxide fuel 718w
Obscenity, Sentencing 700-2w
Pressurised water reactors, Nuclear safety 703w
Sellafield, Mixed oxide fuel 761-2w
Sizewell B 703w

Hoon, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 164-9, (15:04:93) 970
Questions
Angola, Armed conflict 576w
Ministerial policy advisors 369w
Prescription charges exemptions 178w

Hoover
Marketing (01:04:93) 553-5

Horam, Mr John
Questions
Afghanistan, Overseas aid 118w

Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 256
Questions
Paymaster Agency 20w

Horses
Metropolitan Police 725w

Hospices
Children 364w
NHS finance 470w
North West region 364w

Hospital admissions
Acute beds 311-2w

Hospital ancillary staff
Manpower 309w
North Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust 305w
Scotland 309w

Hospital beds
Geriatrics 410w
Mental health services 312w
Psychogeriatrics 360-1w, 457-60w

Hospital closures
Scotland 700w

Hospital doctors
Belfast City Hospital 62w
Downe Hospital 62w
Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast 62w

Hospital patients
EC countries 362w
Fees & charges 362w
Wales 84w

Hospital radio
Radio frequencies 63w

Hospital waiting lists
Death 605w
Heart diseases 32w
Paediatrics 605-6w
Wales 140w

Hospitals
Angus 311w
Charitable donations 311w
Dentistry 153w
Fees & charges 612w
Inner London boroughs 32w
Limited list prescribing 238w
Trafford (01:04:93) 529-32

Hotels
International Fund for Ireland 275w

House condition survey
510w
Wales 415w

House of Commons catering
Access to parliament 463w

House of Commons galleries
(30:03:93) 247-9

House of Commons procedure
Public petitions (31:03:93) 469

House of Commons questions
Church Commissioners 147-8w
Costs 147-8w

House of Lords
126-8w, (31:03:93) 357-9

House of Lords reform
Proportional representation (31:03:93) 357-9

Household Cavalry
13-4w

Housing
Belfast 732-3w
Castlereagh 630w
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 693-712
Exservicemen 508-9w

Housing & elderly
Domestic energy conservation 284w
Electricity 715w
Gas fuels 715w
Medical research 284w

Housing & handicapped
Wales 86-8w

Housing association grant
511-2w

Housing associations
Armed forces housing 60-1w
Ealing 129w
EC law 675w
Homelessness 273w
Housing construction 269w, 271w
Northern Ireland 269-74w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 273w
Rented housing 745w
Temporary accommodation 273-4w
Waiting lists 272-3w

Housing associations as managing agents scheme
674-5w

Housing benefits
Administrative costs 668w
Chelmsford 77w
Elderly 74-5w
Pensioners 77w
Social security benefits rates 667-8w
Social security claims 76w
Students 642w

Housing construction
Council housing 531w
Greater London 530-1w
Housing associations 269w, 271w
London boroughs 677-8w
Northern Ireland 269w
Public sector housing 677-8w

Housing cooperatives
Management agreements 675w

Housing Corporation
326w

Housing estates
Squatting 630-1w

Housing for Wales
415w

Housing insulation
Building regulations 57w
Government grants 527-8w

Housing investment programmes
Greater London 673w

Housing Partnership Fund
349w

Housing problems
Deeside 138w

Housing revenue accounts
682w

Housing stock
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 397-8w

Housing trusts
Armed forces housing 195w

***Howard, Rt Hon Michael**, Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Non-Domestic Rating (No 2) Bill, 1R (01:04:93) 524
Questions
Bletchley Park Trust, Museums & galleries 52w
Council tax 293w
Council tax capping 350w
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 291w
Dept of the Environment, Computer privacy 729w
Dept of the Environment, Contracts for services 282-3w

Howard, Rt Hon Michael—continued
Dept of the Environment, Ethnic monitoring 277-8w
Dept of the Environment, Higher civil sertvants 278w
Dept of the Environment, Management consultants 346-7w
Dept of the Environment, Public appointments 729w
Environment protection, India 347-8w
Hazardous wastes, Radio programmes 277w
Public appointments, Business 285w
Standard spending assessments 731w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 833

Howells, Dr Kim
Questions
EC grants & loans, Wales 84w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 12

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Engineering industries, Manufactured imports 948

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 60, 102-4
Questions
Business questions 955
Health services, Ethnic minorities 235w

Hughes, Mr Robert G, An Assistant Whip
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 243, 288

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
Bees, Gwent 88w
Fines 944
Unemployment, Newport Gwent 10

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1031-7
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 27, 36, 65-8, 116
Questions
Business questions 950
City challenge 512-4w
Jubilee line 438w
Nuclear power 759w
Railway network, Private investment 438w
Road works, Southwark 437w
Urban areas 513w

Human rights
International conferences 380w
Iraq 686w
Israel 580w
Kashmir (01:04:93) 540-3
South Korea 484w
Sudan 577w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Direct labour departments 398-400w

Hunt, Rt Hon David, Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 114-6
Valleys initiative, Ministerial statements (01:04:93) 511-23
Questions
Assisted areas, Wales 88w
Badgers, Pest control 138-9w, 268-9w
Bees, Gwent 88w
British Council, Wales 410w
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation 88-9w

Hunt, Rt Hon David—continued
Civil servants' secondment, European Commission 268w
Civil service dispersal, South Wales 268w
Civil service manpower, Swansea 267w
Class sizes, Wales 408w
Coal mining, Wales 84w
Computer privacy, Wales 462w
Connah's Quay power station 4
Council tax, Wales 462-4w
Development areas, Alyn & Deeside 11
EC grants & loans, Wales 84-5w, 137w
Economic situation, Wales 84w
Employment opportunities, North Wales 406-7w
Farmers, Suicide 250w
Farmers, Wales 269w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 11-2, 85w
Grant maintained schools, Wales 88w
Hill farming, Wales 268w
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 457-8w
Hill livestock allowances, Wales 410-1w
Industrial development, West Wales 10-1
Industry, EC grants & loans 87w
Land acquisition, Swansea 415-6w
Livestock, Auctions 458w
Local government reform, South Wales 263-4w
Local government reform, Wales 85-6w
Ministers' visits abroad, Brussels 267w
Mink, Farms 541w
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 267w
Police, Gwent 7-8
Police, Wales 7-8
Preventive medicine, Wales 416w
Public appointments, Handicapped 89w
Redundancy, Wales 84w
Schools, Capital investment 414-6w
Sealand Estate 266w
Sealand Estate, Estate partnership scheme 266w
Source Wales 85w
Stoneleigh Food Fair, Government assistance 267w
Unemployment, Newport Gwent 10
Unemployment, South Wales 3, 408w
Unemployment, Wales 3
Uniform business rate, Wales 89w
Valleys initiative 85w
Voluntary projects programme, Wales 265w
Welsh Centre for International Affairs 267w
Welsh Development Agency, Capital investment 259-60w
Welsh Development Agency, Environment protection 136w
Welsh Development Agency, Factories 259w
Welsh Development Agency, Finance 3-4, 259-60w
Welsh Development Agency, Land reclamation 259w
Welsh Development Agency, Public appointments 136-7w
Welsh Development Agency, Trade missions 459w
Welsh Office, Departmental publications 541w
Welsh Office, Ethnic monitoring 262w
Welsh Office, Higher civil servants 262-3w
Welsh Office, Private investment 414w
Welsh Office, Public appointments 414w

Hunt, Sir John
Questions
Beauty therapy, Licensing 680w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
GP fundholders, Medical audit 606w
GP fundholders, Prescription drugs 669-70w
Police national computer, Contracts for services 430-1w
WENA Hotels, Egypt 540w

Hunting-Brae
569w
AWE Aldermaston 501w

Huntingtons chorea
Greater Glasgow Health Board 700w
Lothian Health Board 700w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 169-81, 204, 207, 215, 219, 222-3, 225, 241

Hussein, Saddam
(02:04:93) 735-43

Hutton, Mr John
Questions
Diplomatic service, Trade promotion 123w
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 321w
Nuclear weapons tests, Expenditure 16w

Hydrocarbon oil duties
Local government finance 516w

I Spy Strangers
(30:03:93) 247-9

Illsley, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 384
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 819-20
Restart programme, Contracts for services 335-6w

Immigration
722w
Advisory services 111w

Immigration & Nationality Division
726w, 748w
Complaints 224w

Immigration applications
101-2w
Marriage 382w
Somalia 484-5w
Yugoslavia 112w

Immigration controls
Abortion 624-5w
Channel tunnel 440w
Disclosure of information 626w
Treshman, Don 750-1w

Immigration officers
Contracts for services 726w
Ports 726w

Immigration rules
Asian immigrants 112w

Import of live animals
Birds 749w
EC action 749w

Imports
Coal 50w
Hazardous materials 511w
Hazardous wastes 89w, 136w, 285w, 292w, 351w

In vitro fertilisation
Waltham Forest 236w

Incinerators
Germany 674w
Kineton 501-2w
Planning permission 413-4w

Income support
Bed & breakfast accommodation 77w
Elderly 74-5w, 491-2w
Legal aid scheme 526w
Northern region 491-2w
Part-time education 702w
Pensioner premium 421w
Social security benefits rates 418w

Income support*—*continued
Social security benefits rules 702w
Unemployment benefits 170w

"Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiry, May 1992"
701-2w

Income tax
375-6w
Tax rates & bands 483-4
Tax yields 234w

Income tax on investment incomes
Overseas investment 226w

Income-related Benefits Schemes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

Independent Living 1993 Fund
420w

Independent Living Extension Fund
420w

Independent Television Commission
119w

India
Environment protection 347-8w

Indian subcontinent
Work permits 338w

Indirect taxation
224-6w

Indonesia
Foreign policy 122w

Industrial development
West Wales 10-1

Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland
628-9w, 637-8w, 642-56w
Manpower 627w
Religion 275w

Industrial diseases
Bronchitis 76-7w
Emphysema 76-7w

Industrial diseases benefits
Ceramic industries 660w
Coal mining 659-61w
Pneumoconiosis 659w
Social security recipients 659w

Industrial health & safety
Coal mining 212w
Convictions 255-8w
Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 337w
Prosecutions 339-40w

Industrial Injuries Advisory Council
76-7w

Industrial injuries scheme
Bronchitis 492-3w
Emphysema 492-3w

Industrial noise
Prohibition notices 341-2w

Industrial production
947
Scotland 344, 350

Industrial research
Research finance 13

Industrial training schemes
Lanarkshire 342-4

Industrial tribunals
736-7w
Administrative delays 108w
Insolvency 108w
Trade union membership 736w
Unemployment benefits 336-7w

Industry
EC grants & loans 87w

Infant mortality
Northern Ireland 627w

Information
Courts 525w
NHS Management Executive 604-5w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 49
Questions
Aerospace industry 211w, 554w
Aerospace industry, Government grants 211-2w
British Coal Corporation, Government assistance 713w

Inheritance tax
Access to countryside 227-8w
Debts written off 143w
Lancashire 226-7w
Tax allowances 226-7w

Injuries
Dogs 219w
Fireworks 404-5w

Inland Revenue
Electronic funds transfer 374w
Religion 372w

Inner city areas
Road construction 673-4w

Inner London boroughs
Hospitals 32w

Innovation
Aerospace industry 554w

Insolvency
Industrial tribunals 108w
Insurance companies 207-8w

Insolvency practitioners
Regulatory system 494-5w

Insolvency service
495w
Inspections 494w

Insurance companies
Company accounts 207-8w
Insolvency 207-8w

Integrated administration & control system
46-7w, 109-10w, 246-7w, 450w, 454w
Computer privacy 246w

Intelligence services
(29:03:93) 131-8
Accountability 940

Interception of Communications Commissioner
Annual reports 203-4w

Intercountry adoption
Romania 363-4w

Interest payments
478w

Interest rates
Public sector borrowing requirement 479w

International Atomic Energy Agency
82w, 484w, 583w

International Bank for Reconstruction & Development
see World Bank

International Centre for Theoretical Physics
Nuclear weapons 740w

International conferences
Human rights 380w

International Fund for Ireland
Hotels 275w

International Monetary Fund
579w

International organisations
Forestry 128w

International Red Cross
118w

International Stock Exchange of the UK & Republic of Ireland
see Stock Exchange

International Whaling Commission
(02:04:93) 803-10

Intervention stocks
Beef 567w

Intimidation of witnesses
384-5w

"Introduction to Council Tax Benefits"
703w

Invalid care allowances
Energy prices 702-3w
Pensioners 703w

Invalidity benefits
Northern Ireland 632w
Taxation 480w

Inverclyde
Enterprise zones 308-9w
Railway transport 338

Investment income
Treasury 478w

Investment returns
THORP 50w

IRA
733w

Iran
Armed forces deployment 741w
Terrorism 486w, 575w

Iraq
Armed forces strength 173w
Human rights 686w
Law of war 173w
Nuclear weapons 582w
Overseas students 582w, 683w
Petroleum 582w
Sequestration of assets 683w
Weapons 508w

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
Prisoners of war 173w

Irish Republican Army
see IRA

Israel
Human rights 580w
Nuclear weapons 580w
Occupied territories 579-80w
Peace negotiations 815-7
Prisoners 580w

Italy
Nature conservation 293w

***Jack, Mr Michael**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 918-21
Voluntary work (02:04:93) 791-4
Questions
Administration of justice 937-8
Admissibility of evidence, Video recordings 382w
Burglary, Birmingham 623w
Convictions, Cornwall 117w
Crime prevention 719w
Crime prevention, North West region 220-1w
Criminal Justice Act 1991, Magistrates 937
Domestic violence 102-3w
Domestic violence, Arrests 222w
Domestic violence, Crime prevention 221w
Evidence, Admissibility of evidence 623w
Fines 383w, 943-4
Habitual offenders 617w
Home Office, Contracts for services 222w
Homicide, Children 383-4w

Jack, Mr Michael*—*continued
Intimidation of witnesses 384-5w
Judges, Administration of justice 429-30w
Juries, Teachers 110w
Magistrates' Association 219w
Magistrates' courts, Prosecutions 6-12w
Offenders, Greater Manchester 95-6w
Police cautions 96-102w
Pornography 113w
Safer cities scheme 623w
Secure accommodation 720-1w
Sexual offences, Victim support schemes 222w
Squatting, Law reform 217w, 619-20w
Twitchell, Keith, Convictions 217w
Wolds Remand Prison, Per capita costs 113w
Young offenders 719-20w, 939
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 938-9
Young offenders, Parental responsibility 722w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Debates etc.
South East region (01:04:93) 588, 612-5
Violence, Television (01:04:93) 574-5
Questions
Community care, Single homeless 186w
Homelessness, Temporary accommodation 132w

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Questions
Business questions 953
Drug side effects, Computer applications 603w
Drugs, Licensing 605w
GP fundholders 606w
Social security payments 737w
Tyres, Waste disposal 498-9w, 510w
Water meters 675-6w
Water supply, Disclosure of information 676-7w

Jackson, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Public appointments 534w
Chartermark scheme 18
Citizen's Charter, Community care 18-20
Citizen's Charter, Handicapped 17-8
Citizen's Charter, Local government services 17-8
Civil servants, Freemasonry 14-5
Civil service agencies, Accountability 17
Civil service agencies, Performance standards 16
Civil service agencies, Relocation of employees 16
Civil service recruitment, Records of achievement 532-3w
Science & technology, Publicity 91w
Social science research, Research finance 215w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Performance standards 16

Janner, Mr Greville
Debates etc.
Dovelands School Leicester (15:04:93) 1002-4, 1005, 1008, 1009
Questions
Business questions 954
Civil service dispersal, Nottingham 537w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Relocation of employees 761w
Ethnic minorities, Attorney General 344-5w
Ethnic minorities, Cabinet Office 129w
Ethnic minorities, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533w
Ethnic minorities, Dept for Education 216w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Health 178w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of National Heritage 119w
Ethnic minorities, Dept of Transport 294w
Ethnic minorities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 121w

Janner, Mr Greville*—*continued
Ethnic minorities, Home Office 220w
Ethnic minorities, Lord Advocate 697-8w
Ethnic minorities, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 244w
Ethnic minorities, Northern Ireland Office 394w
Ethnic minorities, Privy Council 360w
Ethnic minorities, Treasury 370-1w
Ethnic monitoring, Attorney General 344w
Ethnic monitoring, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept for Education 216w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Employment 251w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Health 178-80w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of the Environment 277-8w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Trade & Industry 158-60w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Transport 294w
Ethnic monitoring, Home Office 220w
Ethnic monitoring, Lord Advocate 697w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 244-5w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Defence 323-4w
Ethnic monitoring, Northern Ireland Office 394w
Ethnic monitoring, Privy Council 360w
Ethnic monitoring, Treasury 371-2w
Ethnic monitoring, Welsh Office 262w
Higher civil servants, Attorney General 345-6w
Higher civil servants, Cabinet Office 45w
Higher civil servants, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533-4w
Higher civil servants, Dept for Education 216w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Employment 250-1w
Higher civil servants, Dept of National Heritage 118-9w
Higher civil servants, Dept of the Environment 278w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Trade & Industry 158w, 160w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Transport 294w
Higher civil servants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 120-1w
Higher civil servants, Home Office 219-20w
Higher civil servants, Lord Advocate 698w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 245-6w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Defence 323w, 500w, 572-4w
Higher civil servants, Northern Ireland Office 394-6w
Higher civil servants, Privy Council 360w
Higher civil servants, Treasury 372w
Higher civil servants, Welsh Office 262-3w
Lithuania, Know-how Fund 812
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 154-5w
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 938-9

Japan
Foreign investment in UK 459w
Foreign relations 576w

Jasmin plc
Defence contracts 504w

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 849
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 882-6
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 175
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Essex 154w
Ozone layer 516w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 368

Job centres
Norfolk 92-3w
Suffolk 92-3w

Job interview guarantee scheme
596-8w

Job review workshops
596-7w

Job search seminars
596-7w

Jobclubs
596-7w

Jobplan workshops
Attendance 334-5w
Contracts for services 335-6w

John Lewis Partnership
59w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 834
Violence, Television (01:04:93) 568-71, 577
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 498

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 162, 177, 259, 293-7, 311, 320-1, (15:04:93) 962, 981-2
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 577-8w
Waste disposal, Brackletter 149w

Joint Nature Conservation Committee
131w

Joint ventures
(16:04:93) 1011-82

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 859, 860
Questions
Business questions 956
Development areas, Alyn & Deeside 11
Elderly, Wales 460w
Housing problems, Deeside 138w
Magistrates' Association 219w
Old people's homes, Wales 459w
Police, Wales 95w, 218-9w
Psychogeriatrics, Hospital beds 457-60w
Residential care, Wales 459-60w
Respite care, Wales 459w
School buildings, Arson 412w
School buildings, Vandalism 412w
Sealand Estate 266w
Sealand Estate, Estate partnership scheme 266w

Jones, Mr Gwilym, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Questions
Amersham International, Radioactive waste disposal 681w
Breast cancer, Screening 137w
Child abuse, Local government social services 260w
Community care, Handicapped 86w
Community care, Wales 411-2w
Community councils, Wales 138w
Contaminated land registers, Wales 681w
Council tax, Transitional relief 87w
Council tenants, Local government social services 682w
Dental services, Wales 265w
Dentists, Manpower 264-6w
Devolution, Wales 5
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Local government expenditure 264w

Jones, Mr Gwilym—continued
District health authorities, Management consultants 409w
Down's syndrome, Wales 261-2w
EC grants & loans, Wales 84w
Elderly, Wales 460w
Family doctors, Pay 681-2w
Fire prevention, Public sector housing 413w
Geriatrics, Hospital beds 410w
GP fundholders, Wales 7
Heart diseases, Surgery 409w
Hepatitis, Screening 87w, 259w
Hospital patients, Wales 84w
Hospital waiting lists, Wales 140w
House condition survey, Wales 415w
Housing & handicapped, Wales 86-8w
Housing associations, Rented housing 745w
Housing problems, Deeside 138w
Incinerators, Planning permission 413-4w
Llanelli Sand Dredging, Licensing 409w
Local government constituencies, Vale of Glamorgan 8-9
Local government reform, Clwyd 413w
Local government reform, Wales 5
Medical examinations, Elderly 411w
Mental health community care, Wales 412w
Mentally handicapped, Sheltered housing 411w
Mentally handicapped, Wales 261w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Medical research 460w
NHS administration, Manpower 455-8w
NHS trusts, Pay 139w
NHS trusts, Wales 6-7
Nurses, Career structure 410w
Old people's homes, Wales 459w
Psychogeriatrics, Hospital beds 457-60w
Radiation protection, Wales 681w
Radiotherapy, North Wales 410w
Radon gas, Health hazards 90w
ReChem International, Air pollution 137-8w
ReChem International, Hazardous wastes 89w
Refuges, Wales 266w
Residential care, Wales 459-60w
Respite care, Wales 459w
Sleeping rough, Wales 412w
Urban programme, Finance 411w
Water supply disconnections, Hepatitis 457w
Water supply disconnections, Wales 407-8w
Welsh Assembly 5
Welsh Grand Committee 5-6

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 836-7
Questions
Crewe-Holyhead railway line 84w
Devolution, Wales 5
Hill farming, Wales 268w

Jones, Dr Lynne
Questions
Body searches 113-4w, 624w
Body searches, Northern Ireland 146w
Burglary, Birmingham 623w
Concessionary fares, Pensioners 441-2w
Defence equipment, Surpluses 323w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Economic regions 552-3w
Educational standards 148
European investment funds 536w
European Monetary Institute 536w
Safer cities scheme 623w
Twitchell, Keith, Convictions 217w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax harmonisation 370w
British Nuclear Fuels, UK companies abroad 705w
Family doctors, Pay 681-2w
Local government reform, Clwyd 413w

Jones, Mr Martyn—continued
Non-departmental public bodies, Wales 267w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Questions
Gloucestershire Constabulary, Manpower 222-3w
Nuclear weapons, Transport of radioactive materials 322-3w, 382w
Police protection, Royal family 222w
Unemployment, Gloucestershire 251-2w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 457
Questions
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 489w
EC institutions, Fraud 948

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Economic forecasting 536-8w
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 570w
National debt 17w, 746w

Journalists
Falkland Islands 571w
Travel 570w

Jowell, Ms Tessa
Questions
NHS, Managers 236w

Jubilee line
438w
Construction 162w

Judges
344w
Administration of justice 429-30w
Age 343w
Commercial Court 196-7w

Judicial Pensions & Retirement Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
(29:03:93) 128

Judicial review
Social Fund 666w

Junior hospital doctors
Working hours 671w

Juries
Teachers 105w, 110w

Jurisdiction
Fraud (14:04:93) 857-923

Kashmir
Human rights (01:04:93) 540-3

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Civil service agencies, Accountability (01:04:93) 525-9
Hospitals, Trafford (01:04:93) 530
House of Commons questions, Points of order (14:04:93) 851-2
Questions
Hong Kong, China 823-4
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 418w
Mobility allowance, Social security claims 418-9w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Performance standards 16

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 416
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 912
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 964
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 378, 403, 404

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Questions
Child Support Act 1991, European Charter of Rights of the Child 487-8w
EC external relations 814

Kennedy, Mrs Jane
Debates etc.
Walton Centre for Neurology & Neurosurgery NHS Trust (31:03:93) 472, 474
Questions
Concessionary fares, Pensioners 441w
Domestic accidents, Carbon monoxide 242w
NHS administration 743-4w
Ophthalmic services, Children 362w
Private rented housing, Domestic appliances 131-2w, 731w

Kent
495-6w
Grammar schools 149

Kent County Council
18

Kenya
Foreign relations 579w

Key, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage
Debates etc.
Violence, Television (01:04:93) 578-83
Questions
Bletchley Park Trust 354-5w
Dept of National Heritage, Computer privacy 688w
Dept of National Heritage, Ethnic minorities 119w
Dept of National Heritage, Higher civil servants 118-9w
Holidays 688-90w
Listed buildings, Buxton 731-2w
London Marathon, Fees & charges 481w
National lottery 482-3w
National lottery, Lottery tickets 483w
National lottery, Prize money 483w
Play, Children 63w
Royal Armouries, Leeds 119w
Royal parks, Management 481-2w

Khmer Rouge
83w

Kilburn
Skillcentres 107-8w

Kilfoyle, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Parliamentary questions, Points of order (31:03:93) 353
Walton Centre for Neurology & Neurosurgery NHS Trust (31:03:93) 471-5, 478

Kincardine
Local government reform 345

Kineton
Incinerators 501-2w

King's Cross Station
298w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 516

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Questions
Business questions 505
Council tax, Timesharing 151w
Cream, Food hygiene 589w
Hospital radio, Radio frequencies 63w
Retirement pensions, Social security payments 153
VAT 142w
Village schools, Borders region 347

Kleinwort Benson
762w

Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler Management Consultants
210w, 762w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 195, 246
Questions
Bolton Borough Council, Contracts for services 350w

Knee replacements
743w

Knight, Mrs Angela
Questions
Fines 383w
Grant maintained schools 147
Japan, Foreign relations 576w
Navy, Redundancy 321w
Police, Finance 719w
Retirement age 661-3w
Retirement age, Sweden 663w

***Knight, Mr Greg**, Lord Commissioner of the Treasury*
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 323

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 366, 383-5, 391

Know-how Fund
579w, 812
Lithuania 812

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Cost per pupil, Wales 6
EC external relations 813-4
Economic situation 370w
Family size 594w
Forestry 148w
"Income Support Statistics Annual Inquiry, May 1992" 701-2w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 348
Retirement pensions, Social security recipients 661-2w

KONVER programme
713w

Kosovo
Armed forces deployment 174-5w

KPMG Management Consultants
see Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler Management Consultants

KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock
17w, 48w, 78-81w, 92w, 114-8w, 176w, 178w, 346-7w, 416w, 706-12w

Kuala Lumpur Airport
Contracts 824-5

Kynoch, Mr George
Questions
Beef premiums, Expenditure 308w
Local government reform, Kincardine 345
Petroleum revenue tax, Tax reform 495-6
Road construction, Scotland 388-9w
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, Performance standards 317w
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council 316w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 152w, 317w

Laboratories
Government contracts 715w

Laboratory of the Government Chemist
see Government Chemist

Labour history
Scotland 344-5

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Questions
Sports Aid Foundation, Government grants 233w

Lakes
59w

Lambeth
Council tax 53w

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Questions
Deregulation initiative 485
Exports 369-70w
Exports, Government assistance 487
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 483-4
National debt 17w, 225-6w, 746w
Personal tax allowances 483-4
Private investment, Treasury 374w
Small businesses, Legislation 485-6
VAT, Fuels 479-81

Lanarkshire
Industrial training schemes 342-4

Lanarkshire Development Agency
342-3

Lancashire
Inheritance tax 226-7w
Railway track 299w

Land acquisition
Clarence Dock 509-10w
Forestry Commission 390-3w
Further education colleges 217w
Mortgages 526w
Swansea 415-6w

Land ownership & tenure
Railway land 4-5w
Trusts 344w

Land reclamation
60w
Welsh Development Agency 259w

Land registration
197-8w

Land Registration (Determination of Costs) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 413

Land Registry Office
198-200w

Land Registry Trading Fund Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 413

Land use
Birmingham 348w

Landlord & tenant
Law reform 195-6w, 291-2w, 343w, 511w

***Lang, Rt Hon Ian**, Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
A75, Dual carriageways 350-2
Community care, Finance 590-1w
Computer privacy 699w
Craft industries, Government assistance 385w
Dentistry, Hospitals 153w
Dept of the Registers of Scotland, Performance standards 316w
Devolution, Scotland 308w, 339-40
EC Committee of the Regions, Scotland 306w
Empty housing, Council housing 150w
Ethnic minorities, Lord Advocate 697-8w
Ethnic monitoring, Lord Advocate 697w
Forestry 148w
Health service staff, Pay settlements 320w
Higher civil servants, Lord Advocate 698w
Historic Scotland, Performance standards 589w
Legal aid scheme, Battered women 337
Legal aid scheme, Scotland 337
Legislation, Scotland 340
Local government finance, Strathclyde 346
Local government reform, Kincardine 345
Local government reform, Scotland 345-7
Non-departmental public bodies, Public appointments 389-90w
Public expenditure, Scotland 306-7w
Road construction, Scotland 388-9w

***Lang, Rt Hon Ian**—continued*
School administration, Scotland 315-6w
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, Performance standards 317w
Scottish Assembly 340
Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency, Performance standards 314w
Scottish Grand Committee 339-40
Scottish Office, Cash limits 152w, 317w
Scottish Office, Private investment 387-8w
Scottish Office, Public appointments 699w
Scottish Office Pensions Agency 318w
Scottish Prison Service 314-5w
Scottish Record Office 317w
University finance, Scotland 344-5
Water supply industry, Privatisation 346

Languages education
155w
Primary education 65w, 266w
Wales 266w
Welsh language 265w

Law of war
Armed forces training 571w
Geneva conventions 580-1w
Iraq 173w
Prosecutions 173-4w

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney General

Law reform
Animal cruelty 751w
Landlord & tenant 195-6w, 291-2w, 343w, 511w
Squatting 217w, 619-20w

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 904-8, 910, 920
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 216, 220, 222, 229-30, 258-9, 304, 307, 316, 322, (15:04:93) 974-5, 979, 981-2
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 376-81, 384, 391
Questions
Motor vehicle theft, Crime prevention 356w

Learning for work
Social security benefits 337w
21 hour rule 418w

Leeds
Health service staff 171w
NHS trusts 603w
Royal Armouries 119w

Legal Advice & Assistance (Amendment) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Legal aid
Guinness 6w

Legal Aid Board
525-6w

Legal Aid Fund
6w

Legal Aid in Criminal & Care Proceedings (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Legal aid scheme
5-6w
Administrative costs 525-6w
Battered women 337
Contracts for services 199-200w
Income support 526w
Legal costs 525-6w
Scotland 319-20w, 337

Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 Amendment Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 362-412

Legal costs
Legal aid scheme 525-6w
Planning appeals 58w

Legal profession
Student grants (01:04:93) 532-5

Legal representation
Royal Ulster Constabulary 395w

Leicester
Civil service dispersal 537w

***Leigh, Mr Edward** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology*
Debates etc.
Post Office (01:04:93) 662-8
Questions
Advertising codes of practice, Women 204w
Aerospace industry 211w
Aerospace industry, Government grants 211-2w
Beer, Measurement 50w
British Technology Group, Privatisation 714w
Consumer protection, Trading standards departments 206w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Economic regions 552-3w
Direct mail 555w
Direct selling 206w, 552w
Direct selling, Complaints 760w
Direct selling, Manpower 403w
Ecolabelling, Paper 212-4w
Fireworks, Injuries 404-5w
Post Office, Management consultants 762w
Post Office, Religion 553w
Postal services, EC action 554w
Sub post offices, Closures 208w
Telecommunications technology, Licensing 204-5w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 161, 166, 173-4, 274-5, 279, 282

***Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office*
Questions
Afghanistan, Overseas aid 118w
Angola, Armed conflict 576w
Diplomatic service, EC countries 378-9w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Computer privacy 685w
Israel, Nuclear weapons 580w
Kenya, Foreign relations 579w
Mattoo, Hamida, Death 583w
Mordechai, Vanunu 580w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, North Korea 82w
Pakistan, Chieftain tanks 122w
Rain forests, Forest protection 360w
Somalia, Political refugees 583-4w
South Africa, Elections 575w
South Africa, Politics & government 575w
South Africa, Rugby 124-5w
Sri Lanka, Diplomatic service 685w
UNESCO 82w
UNESCO, UK contributions 81-2w
USA, Northern Ireland 686w
Zimbabwe, Droughts 117-8w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Burma (30:03:93) 331-2
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 41, 95-7
Questions
Local government services, Contracts for services 55-6w

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
Cycling, Crash helmets 166w
Homicide, Children 383-4w
Road safety, Local government departments 166w

***Lestor, Miss Joan**—continued*
VAT zero rating 477w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 316

Licensing of Air Carriers Regulations 1992
298-9w
Questions
297-8w

Lidington, Mr David
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 501
Police authorities, Management 934-5

Life imprisonment
Codes of practice 223w
Homicide 734-6w
Northern Ireland 734-6w

Lighting
Motorways 697w

***Lilley, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for Social Security*
Questions
Industrial diseases, Bronchitis 76-7w
Ministers' visits abroad, Travelling expenses 304w
Pension Law Review Committee 170-1w

Limited list prescribing
238-9w
Hospitals 238w

Lindholme Prison
Per capita costs 113w

Listed buildings
Buxton 731-2w

Lithuania
Know-how Fund 812

Liverpool
Community nurses (31:03:93) 470
Ministers' domestic visits 377w
Unemployment 337-8w

Livestock
Auctions 449w, 451-2w, 458w, 522w
Northern Ireland 449w
Scotland 522w
Wales 458w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1063
Russia (02:04:93) 781-5

Llanelli
Assisted areas 4-5

Llanelli Sand Dredging
Licensing 409w

Llanfair Caereinion
Unemployment 593w

Llantarnam Abbey
409w

Llantarnam bypass
Road construction 409w

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Questions
Boundary Commission for England, Essex 104w
Companies' political contributions, Public utilities 114w
Computer privacy, EC action 218w
Computer privacy, EC law 217-8w
Computer privacy, Stock Exchange 218w
Emergency planning, Greater London 622w
Ethnic minorities, Government grants to local authorities 96w
European Parliament constituencies 383w, 936-7

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**—continued*
Fire regulations 384w, 430w
Fires, Rented housing 623-4w
Glen Parva Youth Custody Centre 720w
Home Office, Computer privacy 622w
London Fire & Civil Defence Authority, Contracts for services 723-4w
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry 616w
Medomsley Prison, Property transfer 723w
Nuclear weapons, Transport of radioactive materials 382w
Prison education services, Contracts for services 621w, 752w
Prison overcrowding, Prison rules 615-6w
Prison population 617-9w
Prison Service Union, Trade union recognition 117w
Prison staff, Employment protection 111w
Prisoner escorts, Contracts for services 750w
Prisoner escorts, Pregnant women 431w
Prisoners, Children in care 726-8w
Prisoners, Drug crimes 615w
Prisoners, Educational assessment 724w
Prisoners, Ethnic minorities 616w
Prisoners, Nationality 615w
Prisons, Guard dogs 722-3w
Race Relations Act 1976, Public service 431w
Racial discrimination 752w
Remand Contract Unit, Civil service manpower 726w
Sunday trading 722w
Verne Prison, Prison staff 725w
Wandsworth Prison, Prison visits 724-5w
Wolds Remand Prison, Codes of practice 614w
Young offenders, Prison education services 724w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Questions
Career development loan scheme 597w
Community care grants, Refugees 169w
Employment schemes 594w, 596-7w
Employment schemes, Per capita costs 594-5w
Race Relations Act 1976, Public service 431w

Lloyd's of London
510
Tax allowances 229w

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 393, 398
Questions
Advertising codes of practice, Women 204w
Broadcasting Act 1990, Equal opportunities 119w
Council tax, Transitional relief 87w, 131w
Domestic violence, Arrests 222w
Domestic violence, Crime prevention 221w
Holidays 688-90w
Low flying 502-4w
Police, Wales 7
Pornography 113w
Refuges, Wales 266w
Sexual offences, Victim support schemes 222w
Tourism, Wales 460w
Tourists, Wales 461w

Lobbying
Nuclear weapons tests 485w

Lobsters
Fishing catches 274w
Northern Ireland 274w

Local authorities
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 18w
Complaints 348w
Disabled workers 94-5w

Local education authorities
Standard spending assessments 509w
Teachers 545-7w

Local Education Business Partnerships
London East Training & Enterprise Council 436w
Training & enterprise councils 428w

Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(30:03:93) 327-9

Local enterprise companies
313w, 588w

Local Enterprise Development Unit
647-56w
Manpower 627w
Religion 401w

Local government
Greater London 513w
Local government services (16:04:93) 1011-82

Local government borrowing
130w, 293w

Local Government Commission for England
584w

Local government constituencies
Scotland 318-9w
Vale of Glamorgan 8-9

Local government departments
Road safety 166w

Local government elections
Northern Ireland (30:03:93) 327-9

Local government expenditure
Contaminated land registers 527w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 264w
Homelessness 529w

Local government finance
Hydrocarbon oil duties 516w
Strathclyde 346

Local government reform
Ayrshire 348
Clwyd 413w
Employment opportunities 634w
Employment protection 584w
Greater London 135w
Kincardine 345
Northern Ireland 634w
School administration 543w
Scotland 307w, 345-7, 584-5w
South Wales 9-10, 263-4w
Wales 5, 85-6w

Local government services
Citizen's Charter 17-8
Contracts for services 54-6w
Local government (16:04:93) 1011-82

Local government social services
613w
Child abuse 260w
Community care 612-3w
Council tenants 682w
Handicapped 608w
Racial harassment 183w

Local government staff
Archaeology 679w
Freemasonry 514w
Manpower 309w
Scotland 309w

Local income tax
350w

Locate in Scotland
393w

London airports
Air traffic 694w

London Ambulance Service
239-40w, 600w
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 669-85

London Ambulance Service*—*continued
Out-patients 600w

London Ambulance Service Inquiry
239-40w

London boroughs
AIDS support grant 613-4w
Housing construction 677-8w

London Buses
440w, 558-9w
Investment 691-2w
Privatisation 438w

London Docklands Development Corporation
437w

London East Training & Enterprise Council
Government grants 427-8w
Local Education Business Partnerships 436w
Manpower 428w
Public appointments 429w

London Fire & Civil Defence Authority
Contracts for services 723-4w
Emergency planning 622w

London Forum
Costs 284w
Finance 284w

London Implementation Group
Acute beds 32w

London Marathon
Fees & charges 481w

London Regional Transport
558-9w, (01:04:93) 584-625
Government grants 441w

London Residuary Body
135w, 729-30w
Operating costs 730w

Londonderry
Employment opportunities 655w

Lone parents
Energy prices 665w

Lord, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 260, 272, 287

Lord Advocate
Disabled workers 697-8w
Ethnic minorities 697-8w
Ethnic monitoring 697w
Higher civil servants 698w
Women 697w

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Contracts for services 198-200w
Private investment 343w
Public appointments 526w

Lorries
Motor vehicle testing 558w

Lorry drivers
Death 561w

Lost working days
593w
Northern Ireland 641w

Lothian Health Board
Huntington's chorea 700w

Lottery tickets
National lottery 483w

Low flying
502-4w

Low incomes
303w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Community nurses, Public petitions (31:03:93) 470
Questions
VAT, Fuels 490-1

Luff, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 519
Questions
Blood donors, Palace of Westminster 147w
British Rail, Performance standards 163-5w
Business questions 508
National insurance contributions 485

Luton Airport
694w

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas, Attorney-General
Questions
Attorney General, Ethnic minorities 344-5w
Attorney General, Ethnic monitoring 344w
Attorney General, Higher civil servants 345-6w
Contracts for services, Employment protection 525w
European Court of Justice 126-8w
Government Property Lawyers Agency 16-7w
Prosecutions 200-1w

Lynne, Ms Liz
Questions
Ambulance services, Manpower 363w
Cancer, Medical research 468w
Community care, Codes of practice 612w
Community care, Local government social services 612-3w
Community care, Rehabilitation centres 612w
Local government social services 613w
Mental patients, Codes of practice 180w
Mental patients, Counselling 180w
Mental patients, Self help 180-1w
NHS trusts, Ambulance services 181w
Rehabilitation centres, Finance 611w

M4
Road signs 409w

M11
Road construction 693w

M25
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 626-44

M80
Cumbernauld Development Corporation 319w

McAllion, Mr John
Questions
Devolution, Scotland 339

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Questions
Victoria Infirmary Glasgow 341

McCartney, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Arachnoiditis, Back pain (14:04:93) 928
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 60, 61, 62
Questions
Broadmoor Hospital, Patients' rights 672-3w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, Crime prevention 429w
South Africa, Rugby 124-5w
Special hospitals, Patients' rights 363w

Macclesfield Health Authority
(02:04:93) 744-52

McCrea, Rev William
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland, Pay incentives 325w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 396w

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 213, 234, 238
Questions
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 390-3w

Macdonald, Mr Calum—continued
Water charges, Rural areas 306w

Macedonia
Armed forces deployment 174-5w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 366, 371-6
Questions
Legal aid scheme, Battered women 337
Offensive weapons 719w
Peru, Democracy 824

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Questions
Belfast City Hospital, Hospital doctors 62w
Downe Hospital, Hospital doctors 62w
Housing associations, Homelessness 273w
Housing associations, Housing construction 269w, 271w
Housing associations, Northern Ireland 269-71w
Housing associations, Temporary accommodation 273-4w
Housing associations, Waiting lists 272-3w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing associations 273w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Waiting lists 269w

***MacGregor, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
British Rail, Performance standards 163-5w
Dept of Transport, Environmental policy 692-3w
Dept of Transport, Private investment 355w
EC Transport Council, Voting behaviour 2w
Road construction, Contracts 358-9w
Road traffic control, Greater London 355w
Transport policy 692w

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 394-7
Questions
North Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust 305w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (02:04:93) 795-802
Recess motions, Easter (31:03:93) 562
Rural areas (01:04:93) 554-5, 560
South East region (01:04:93) 588, 594-600, 605
Questions
Car industry 206-7w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Ministerial duties 90w
EC grants & loans, Greater London 207w
House of Commons questions, Church Commissioners 147-8w
Industrial tribunals 736-7w
Industrial tribunals, Trade union membership 736w
Serbia, Sanctions 825-6
Squirrels, Nature conservation 54w
VAT 368w
Vote bundle, Costs 147w

Macknurdo Building
59w

***Maclean, Mr David**, Minister for the Environment and Countryside*
Questions
Air pollution, EC law 532w
Air pollution control, Greater London 673w
Birds, Nature conservation 131w
Broadmoor Hospital, Patients' rights 672-3w
Business & the Environment Advisory Committee 676w
Carbon dioxide, Nuclear power stations 160-1w

Maclean, Mr David—continued
Coastal zone management, EC action 131w
Consultants, Quality control 292w
Contaminated land registers, Local government expenditure 527w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, EC internal trade 293w
Countryside stewardship scheme 518w
Dioxins, Derbyshire 290-1w
Domestic energy conservation, Housing & elderly 284w
EC Environment Council, Voting behaviour 532w
Energy Saving Trust 511w
Environment protection, Women 54w
Environment Select Committee, Forestry 678w
Environmental Action Fund 54w
Exhaust emissions, Buses 529w
Hazardous materials, Imports 511w
Hazardous wastes, EC action 292w
Hazardous wastes, EC law 517-8w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 136w, 285w, 292w, 351w
Hedgerow incentive scheme 60w, 135w
Home energy efficiency scheme 283w, 348w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Greater London 283w
Housing insulation, Government grants 527-8w
Incinerators, Germany 674w
Land reclamation 60w
National parks authorities 349w
Nature conservation, Coastal areas 131w
Nature conservation, Italy 293w
Oil pollution, Shipping 53-4w
Ozone layer 516w
Radioactive waste disposal 277w
Radioactive wastes, Water pollution 52-3w
Radon gas, Health hazards 520-1w
Recycling, Expenditure 276-7w
Recycling, Supplementary credit approvals 285-8w
Sellafield, Radioactive waste disposal 531w
Special protection areas 59w
Squirrels, Nature conservation 54w
Tipping of waste 133w
Tipping of waste, Gases 276w
Tyres, Waste disposal 510w
Waste management, Expenditure 276w
Water & sewerage companies, Fences 673w
Water meters 519-20w, 675-6w
Water pollution, Norfolk 59w
Water supply, Disclosure of information 676-7w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Questions
Local government reform, Scotland 346-7

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 858, 869, 886-9
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 363, 385-9
Questions
Metropolitan Police 943

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment*
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Annual reports 683w
Career development loan scheme 597w
Community action 93w
Conditions of employment, Dismissal 106w
Day nurseries, Greater London 598w
Dept of Employment, Computer privacy 594w
Dept of Employment, Ethnic monitoring 251w
Dept of Employment, Higher civil servants 250-1w
Dept of Employment, Public appointments 593w
Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, Industrial health & safety 337w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick—continued
Employment level, Greater London 342w
Employment opportunities, Business start-up scheme 93w
Employment opportunities, Greater London 342w
Employment schemes 593-4w, 596-7w
Employment schemes, Per capita costs 594-5w, 598w
Employment schemes, Travelling expenses 596-7w
Family size 594w
Gas safety 593w
Gas safety, Holiday accommodation 342-3w
Industrial health & safety, Convictions 255-8w
Industrial health & safety, Prosecutions 339-40w
Industrial noise, Prohibition notices 341-2w
Industrial tribunals 736-7w
Industrial tribunals, Administrative delays 108w
Industrial tribunals, Trade union membership 736w
Industrial tribunals, Unemployment benefits 336-7w
Job centres, Norfolk 92-3w
Learning for work, Social security benefits 337w
Local Education Business Partnerships, Training & enterprise councils 428w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Government grants 427-8w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Manpower 428w
London East Training & Enterprise Council, Public appointments 429w
Lost working days 593w
Part-time employment, Manpower 596w
Part-time employment, Pay 595-6w
Restart programme 105-6w, 252-6w
Restart programme, Attendance 334-5w
Restart programme, Contracts for services 335-6w
Skillcentres, Kilburn 107-8w
Social security payments 737w
"TEC Operating Agreement 1993" 108w
Training & enterprise councils, Expenditure 427w
Travel to interview scheme, Subsistence allowances 682-3w
Unemployment, Gloucestershire 251-2w
Unemployment, Graduates 106w
Unemployment, Liverpool 337-8w
Unemployment, Llanfair Caereinion 593w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 93-4w, 428-9w
Vocational training, Equal opportunities 594w
Work permits, Cricket 338w
Workstart, East Anglia 93w
Youth unemployment 592w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 839

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Questions
Bombings, Compensation 750w
Northern Ireland Office, Departmental correspondence 656w
Railway transport 739w
Transport 739w

McWilliam, Mr John
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 498-9
Crime, Police authorities 756-60w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 833
Documents, Points of order (29:03:93) 21
Questions
Ali, Ghazanfer 127w
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 500-1

Madden, Mr Max—continued
Bradford County Court, Care proceedings 426w
Business questions 509
Immigration applications, Yugoslavia 112w
Mattoo, Hamida, Death 583w
Retirement pensions, Social security payments 77-8w
Work permits, Cricket 338w
Work permits, Sports competitors 384w

Maelor Hospital
Hepatitis 87w, 259w

Magistrates
Criminal Justice Act 1991 426w, 937
Resignations 426w

Magistrates' Association
218-9w

Magistrates' courts
Prosecutions 6-12w

Magnox reactors
Energy review 713w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 704w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Questions
Dept of Health, Offices 32w

Maintenance
Appeals (31:03:93) 413
Social security benefits rules 658-9w

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Retirement age (01:04:93) 686-9
Questions
Educational standards, Primary education 157-8w
Educational standards, Teaching methods 64w
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 722w
Religious education, Curriculum 153-4w
Sex education, Contraceptives 351w

Major, Rt Hon John, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
Ali, Ghazanfer 127w
Armed forces pensions 539w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 739-40w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Costs 739w
Bill of Rights 44w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 492-4, 540w, 946
Cabinet Office, Ethnic minorities 129w
Cabinet Office, Higher civil servants 45w
Cabinet papers, Environment protection 464w
Coal mining, Government grants 202w
Cot deaths 153
Council tax 154
Council tax, Basildon 496
Council tax, Residential care 203w
Council tax, Wellingborough 493
EC institutions, Fraud 948
Egypt, Overseas aid 465w
Egypt, Religious discrimination 540w
Employment policy 45w
Energy prices, Price increases 946-7
Engineering industries, Manufactured imports 948
English education, Educational assessment 947-8
Environmental policy 44-5w
Environmental policy, Ministerial duties 538w
European Court of Justice, EC law 377w
Film industry 152-3
Fishing crews, Public order offences 152-4
Forestry, International organisations 128w
Government departments, Contracts for services 539-40w
Helicopter carriers 154
Industrial production 947
Interception of Communications Commissioner, Annual reports 203-4w

Major, Rt Hon John—continued
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 494
Ministers' domestic visits, Liverpool 377w
National Union of Rail Maritime & Transport Workers, Strikes 944-5
National Union of Students 155
National Union of Teachers, Conferences 946
Non-departmental public bodies 202w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 46w, 464-5w
Nuclear test ban 46w
Nuclear weapons tests 203w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 539w
Official engagements 129w, 377w, 688w
Pakistan, Nuclear non proliferation 464w
Pakistan, Nuclear weapons 464w
Petroleum revenue tax, Tax reform 495-6
Political parties, Finance 44w, 492
Prime Minister, Civil service manpower 377-8w
Prime Minister, Public appointments 465w
Prime Minister's questions 465w
Public appointments 154-5, 201-2w
Railway transport, Strikes 492
Regional government 377w
Retirement pensions, Social security payments 153
Security Service Commissioner, Annual reports 203w
Serbia, Sanctions 945-6
Severe hardship provision, East Midlands 495
South Africa, Arms exports 687w
South Africa, Nuclear weapons 45w
South Africa, Nuclear weapons tests 45w
Terrorism, Republic of Ireland 496, 538-9w
Treaty on European Union, Referenda 156
UNESCO 156
War pensions, Social security benefits rules 740w
Warehouse parties, High Peak 494-5
WENA Hotels, Egypt 540w
Wood, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 203w
Yugoslavia, Armed conflict 944
Yugoslavia, War crimes 494

Malaysia
Foreign relations 824-5
Rain forests 825

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Questions
Northern Ireland health & social services boards, Pay incentives 276w
University finance, Northern Ireland 656-8w

Malta
EC external trade 493w

Management agreements
Housing cooperatives 675w

Management consultants
324-5w
Dept of Employment 92w
Dept of Health 178w
Dept of Social Security 416w
Dept of the Environment 346-7w
Dept of Trade & Industry 706-12w
District health authorities 409w
Expenditure 194w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 78-81w
Home Office 114-8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 48w
Ministry of Defence 176w
Post Office 762w
Railway freight transport 4w
Treasury 17w

Managers
NHS 236w, 471-2w

Manchester
Planning permission 514-5w

Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry
615-6w

Mandelson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 167, 168, 209-14
Questions
VAT, Fuels 489

Mans, Mr Keith
Questions
Road construction, Contracts 358-9w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 161-2w

Manufactured imports
Engineering industries 948

Manufacturing industries
Civil servants' secondment 706w
Diplomatic service 234w
North East region 487
Scotland 350

Manufacturing planning & implementation scheme
51-2w

Maps
Northern Ireland 657w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Anaesthetics, Out-patient clinics 466w
Family doctors, Prescriptions 598w
Hepatitis, Doctors 32w
Hepatitis, Screening 31w, 87w, 259w
Limited list prescribing 239w
Limited list prescribing, Hospitals 238w
St Helena, Motor vehicles 581w

Marginal land
Hill livestock allowances 449-50w, 457-8w, 521-2w

Marginal tax rates
Social security & taxation 302w

Marketing
Hoover (01:04:93) 553-5

Markets
283-5w
Animal welfare 48-9w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 164, 168, 170, 174, 185, 189, 191, 196, 201, 204-5, 214-30, (15:04:93) 973-4, 987, 988
Second Chamber (Reform) Bill, 1R (31:03:93) 359-60

Marriage
Immigration applications 382w

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
European Year of the Elderly 307w
Foreign investment in UK, Hong Kong 524w
Motor vehicle testing, Diesel engines 561-2w
Parliamentary constituencies, Scotland 312-3w
Scottish Enterprise, Offices 393w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Crash helmets, Sikhs (01:04:93) 548-50
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 820
Energy prices, Price increases 946-7
Secure accommodation 720w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1068-71
Post Office (01:04:93) 653-6
South East region (01:04:93) 596-7, 605, 615-6
Questions
Arab boycott, Overseas trade 493w

Marshall, Mr John—continued
Community health councils, Expenditure 361w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 85w
Hospital patients, Fees & charges 362w
Housing insulation, Government grants 527-8w
Know-how Fund, 812
Prescription charges exemptions 362w
Science & technology policy 90-1w
Welsh Assembly 5

Martin, Mr David
Questions
Assisted areas, Portsmouth 205w
Disabled workers, Training 105w
Prison Service Union, Trade union recognition 117w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Questions
Blood donors, Palace of Westminster 147w
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 463w
House of Commons questions, Church Commissioners 147-8w
Motor vehicle theft, Strathclyde 309w
School buildings, Repairs & maintenance 348-9
Vote bundle, Costs 147w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Questions
Agricultural subsidies 453w
Agriculture, Environment protection 451w
Air force bases, Sea rescue 506w
Armed forces deployment 506w
Cumbria Constabulary 933
Environmentally sensitive areas, Expenditure 452-3w
RAF Leuchars, Sea rescue 506-7w
University Air Squadron 507w

Maternity services
Scotland 341

Mates, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Body searches, Northern Ireland 146w
Crime, Newtownabbey 396-7w
Death, Northern Ireland 628w
European Commission, Civil servants' secondment 628w
Firearms certificates, Northern Ireland 449w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 629w
International Fund for Ireland, Hotels 275w
Local government reform, Employment opportunities 634w
Northern Ireland Office, Computer privacy 733-4w
Northern Ireland Office, Ethnic minorities 394w
Northern Ireland Office, Ethnic monitoring 394w
Northern Ireland Office, Higher civil servants 394-6w
Northern Ireland Office, Private investment 402w
Northern Ireland Office, Public appointments 641w
Northern Ireland Valuation & Lands Agency 402-3w
Police patrolling, Newtownabbey 397w
Ports, Privatisation 640w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Disabled workers 146w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Legal representation 395w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police firearms 634-5w
Sexual offences, Community service orders 640w
Terrorism, Arrests 732w
Terrorism, Death 635-6w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 396w, 401-2w
VAT, Energy prices 395w
Wasting police time, Prosecutions 395w

Mates, Mr Michael—continued
Young offenders, Northern Ireland 632w

Mathematics education
143
Educational standards 142
Teachers 142-3
Women 142

Mattoo, Hamida
Death 583w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, Minister for Health
Questions
Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs 608-10w
Alcohol advertising, Health warnings 364w
Alternative medicine, Family doctors 31w
Azapropazone, Drug side effects 179w
Baxter Healthcare, NHS 364w
Chemists shops, Merton 599-600w
Child psychiatrists, Manpower 603w
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Disclosure of information 599w
Community care, Health visitors 612w
Contact lenses, Eye disorders 238w
Dental services, Elderly 468w
Dental services, NHS 240w
District health authorities, Public appointments 364w
Drug hazards 600-1w
Drug research 467w
Drug side effects, Computer applications 603w
Drugs, Licensing 599w, 605w
Family doctors, Prescriptions 598w
Family health services authorities, Greater London 365w
First aid 179w
GP fundholders 236-7w, 606-7w
GP fundholders, Medical audit 606w
GP fundholders, Prescription drugs 669-70w
Grimsby & Scunthorpe Health Authority, Public appointments 187w
Health, Coal mine closures 185w
Health service staff, Pay 366w, 605w
Health services, Fees & charges 468w
Hepatitis, Doctors 32w
Hospital patients, Fees & charges 362w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 671w
Limited list prescribing 238-9w
Limited list prescribing, Hospitals 238w
London Implementation Group, Acute beds 32w
Medical equipment, Oxygen 366w
Medical examinations, Elderly 599w
NHS administration, Manpower 39-44w
NHS Management Executive, Information 604-5w
NHS trusts, Ambulance services 181w
NHS trusts, Pay 603w
Ophthalmic services, Children 362w
Pharmacists, Fees & charges 599w
Pre-payment certificates 236w
Prescription charges exemptions 178w, 362w
Prescriptions, Expenditure 361-2w
Preventive medicine, Family doctors 29-30w
Primary health care, Greater London 33w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 609-11w
Schizophrenia, World Health Organisation 611w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority, Publications 185w

Maxwell companies
Pension funds 494

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Life imprisonment, Homicide 734-6w
Northern Ireland Office, Departmental correspondence 656w
Prisoners, Police interrogation 733w

McCloy Committee
see Northern Ireland Curriculum Council

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Points of order (31:03:93) 354-5
Questions
Commodity agreements, Rubber 496w
Environment Select Committee, Forestry 678w
Forest protection 588w
Overseas Projects Board 496w
Rain forests, Forest protection 360w
Wood, Broadleaved woodlands 589w

Meale, Mr Alan
Questions
Armed forces, Blood sports 11-4w
Defence land, Blood sports 11w
Defence land, Gun sports 14-5w
Forestry Commission, Blood sports 589w

Means tested benefits
301-2w
Pensioners 416-7w
Social security recipients 417-8w

Measurement
Beer 50w

Medical appeal tribunals
Handicap benefits 421-2w

Medical audit
Family doctors 606w
GP fundholders 606w

Medical education
Student numbers 548w

Medical equipment
Oxygen 366w

Medical examinations
Elderly 411w, 599w

Medical gases
366w

Medical records
Disability living allowance 300w, 490w

Medical research
Asthma 470w
Cancer 468w
Housing & elderly 284w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 460w, 641w
Schizophrenia 670w

Medical Research Council
91w

Medical treatments
Fertility 745-6w

Medicines Commission
599w

Medicines Control Agency
365w
Disclosure of information 599w
Finance 179-80w

Medomsley Prison
Property transfer 723w

Members' correspondence
Administrative delays 349w, 418w

Members' travel
570w

Members' visits abroad
Falkland Islands 571w

Meningitis
Vaccination 362-3w

Mental health community care
Wales 412w

Mental health review tribunals
238w

Mental health services
465-6w, (02:04:93) 753-9
Croydon Health Authority 466w

Mental health services—continued
Hospital beds 312w
Schizophrenia 670w
Scotland 312w, 521w

Mental patients
613w
Codes of practice 180w
Counselling 180w
Schizophrenia 611w
Self help 180-1w

Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
319-20w

Mentally Disordered Offenders' Services Review
Health services 466w

Mentally handicapped
Sheltered housing 411w
Wales 261w

Mentally ill
Death 363w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1021, 1050-5

Mersey Regional Health Authority
(31:03:93) 471-8

Merseyside
Building industry 679w

Merseyside Development Corporation
509-10w

Merthyr Tydfil
137w

Merton
Chemists shops 599-600w

Meteorological Office
572-4w

Metropolitan Police
719w, 940-3
Falkland Islands 104w
Horses 725w
Inquiries 104w
Performance standards 932-3

MI5
(29:03:93) 131-8

Michael, Mr Alun
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 913-8
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 522
Questions
Contracts for services, Employment protection 525w
Government departments, Contracts for services 539-40w
Home Office, Contracts for services 619-21w, 725-6w, 749-50w, 752w
Immigration officers, Contracts for services 726w
Police national computer, Contracts for services 621-2w
Police Staff College, Contracts for services 619-20w
Prison education services, Contracts for services 621w
Prisoner escorts, Contracts for services 750w
Remand Contract Unit, Civil service manpower 726w
Young offenders 939

Michie, Mrs Ray
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Scotland 572w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 572w
Exservicemen, Housing 508-9w
Railway transport, Rural areas 338

Microforms
Registration of births deaths & marriages 240w

Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust
(02:04:93) 744-52

Mid Wales
502-4w

Middle East
Nuclear weapons 740-1w
Peace negotiations 573-4w

Midland Metro Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
3R* (15:04:93) 931

Midwives
Community health services 149w
Professional qualifications 318w
Scotland 149w, 318w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Questions
A66, A1 299w
Badgers, Pest control 138-9w
Coal mining, Income 52w
Death rate, Health authorities 471-2w
Home energy efficiency scheme 283w, 348w
Home energy efficiency scheme, Greater London 283w
Income tax 375-6w
Juries, Teachers 105w, 110w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 161-2w
Mink, Farms 541w, 564w, 590w, 657w
National income 21w
National insurance contributions 234w, 304-6w
Negative equity 232w
NHS, Administrative costs 614w
Personal tax allowances 17-8w
VAT, Fuels 142w
VAT registration 228-30w

Military aircraft
Bosnia-Herzegovina 577-8w
USA 195w

Military discipline
Falkland Islands 15w

Military exercises
South Korea 324w

Military vehicles
Transport of radioactive materials 558w

Milk Development Council
245w

Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland
633w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 399
Questions
Helicopters, Rescue services 299w, 556w

Milligan, Mr Stephen
Questions
EC Cohesion Fund, EC environmental policy 206w
Singapore, Foreign policy 575w

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Unitary development plans, Solihull 347w

Minerals
Food additives 47-8w

Mines
118w

Mines & Quarries Inspectorate
341-2w

Ministerial duties
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 90w
Environmental policy 538w

Ministerial policy advisors
369w
Disclosure of information 330-1w

Ministerial powers
Animal experiments 103-4w

Ministerial responsibility
(01:04:93) 525-9

Ministerial statements
Bosnia-Herzegovina (14:04:93) 829-41
Competition (14:04:93) 842-50
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 511-23

Ministers' domestic visits
Bolton 90w
Liverpool 377w

Ministers' visits abroad
Brussels 267w
Energy policy 405w
Expenditure 405w
France 304w
South Korea 484w, 687w
Travelling expenses 304w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Computer privacy 568w
Contracts for services 109w
Disabled workers 244w
Ethnic minorities 244w
Ethnic monitoring 244-5w
Government contracts 48w
Higher civil servants 245-6w
Management consultants 48w
Private investment 326w
Public appointments 566-7w
Women 244-5w

Ministry of Defence
Civil service recruitment 177w
Computer privacy 571w
Contracts for services 325w
Ethnic monitoring 323-4w
Government contracts 176w
Higher civil servants 323w, 500w, 572-4w
Management consultants 176w
Northern Ireland 505w
Private investment 322w
Public appointments 506w
Women 323-4w

Ministry of Defence police
Army bases 508w

Mink
Farms 541w, 564w, 590w, 657w
Northern Ireland 657w
Scotland 590w
Wales 541w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Bank of England, Credit 478w
Banks, Small businesses 747-8w
Credit, EC countries 478w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Debts written off 760-1w
National Loans Fund, Credit 478-9w
National Transcommunications, Privatisation 689-90w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Interest rates 479w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Treaty on European Union 479w, 749w

Mitchell, Sir David
Questions
Newbury bypass 167w
Testbourne School, Grant maintained schools 351w

Mixed oxide fuel
718w
Sellafield 761-2w

Mobility allowance
Social security claims 418-9w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 968-9

Monklands District Council
335-6

***Monro, Sir Hector**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office*
Questions
Access to countryside, Fees & charges 586-7w
Badgers, Scotland 148w, 313w
Beef premiums, Expenditure 308w
Cream, Food hygiene 589w
Environment protection, Non-governmental organisations 152-3w
Fishing grounds, Oil pollution 587w
Forest Enterprise 586w
Forest protection 588w
Forestry Commission, Blood sports 589w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 390-3w
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 521-2w
Livestock, Auctions 522w
Mink, Farms 590w
Pollution monitoring, Shetland 393w
Ports, Greenock 63-4w
Sewage, Waste disposal 387w
Waste disposal, Brackletter 149w
Water charges, Rural areas 306w
Water pollution, EC law 522-4w
Water supply industry, Scotland 309w
Wood, Broadleaved woodlands 589w

Montenegro
Sanctions 825-6

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Hospitls, Trafford (01:04:93) 529-32
Questions
Malaysia, Foreign relations 824-5
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 721-2w

Mordechai, Vanunu
580w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Questions
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation 88-9w
Civil servants' secondment, European Commission 268w
Coal mine closures, Wales 139w
Community care, Citizen's charter 191-2w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 300w, 490w
Electricity interconnectors, Republic of Ireland 716w
European Commission, Civil servants' secondment 586w, 628w
Heathrow Airport, Railway network 165w
House condition survey, Wales 415w
Medical equipment, Oxygen 366w
Ministers' visits abroad, Brussels 267w
National Library of Wales, Management 415w
NHS trusts, Pay 139w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 404w
Police, Wales 722w
Ports, EC grants & loans 165w
S4C, Television viewers 482w
Training & enterprise councils, Wales 139-40w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 93-4w
Vaccination 188-92w
Welsh Development Agency, Trade missions 459w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 455-60
Questions
Agriculture, Public expenditure 49w
Animal cruelty, Law reform 751w
Animal welfare, Markets 48-9w
Basking sharks, Fish conservation 49w
Basking sharks, Fishing catches 49w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, EC internal trade 293w

***Morley, Mr Elliot**—continued*
Grimsby & Scunthorpe Health Authority, Public appointments 187w
Nature conservation, Italy 293w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 439w
Community care, Elderly 468-9w
Council tax, Residential care 203w, 288-9w
Disability (Grants) Bill 1992/93 488w
Handicapped, Local government social services 608w
Heart diseases, Surgery 181w
Income support, Bed & breakfast accommodation 77w
Industrial diseases benefits, Coal mining 660-1w
Industrial injuries scheme, Emphysema 492-3w
Planning permission, Demolition 514-5w
Temporary accommodation, Cookers 58w
War pensions, Social security benefits rules 740w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Questions
Azapropazone, Drug side effects 179w
Mathematics education, Women 142
Treasury, Investment income 478w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Magistrates' courts, Prosecutions 6-12w
Police cautions 96-102w

Mortgages
371w, 528w
Land acquisition 526w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Employment, EC grants & loans 252w
Fireworks, Injuries 404-5w

Motability
420w

Motor vehicle registration
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency 356w

Motor vehicle testing
Diesel engines 561-2w
Lorries 558w
Public service vehicles 558w

Motor vehicle theft
Crime prevention 356w
Strathclyde 309w

Motor vehicles
Fire services 383w
St Helena 581w

Motorway service areas
697w

Motorways
Lighting 697w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Questions
Civil service agencies, Accountability 17
Domestic violence 102-3w
Environment protection, Women 54w
Environmental Action Fund 54w

Mucous membrane disease
Northern region 422w
Social security claims 422w

Mudie, Mr George
Questions
Political parties, Finance 492

Mullin, Mr Chris
Questions
Civil servants, Freemasonry 14
Human rights, International conferences 380w

***Mullin, Mr Chris**—continued*
United Arab Emirates, Armed forces deployment 15w
United Arab Emirates, Armed forces training 15w
United Arab Emirates, Corporal punishment 233w
United Arab Emirates, Diplomatic service 83w
United Arab Emirates, Overseas trade 161w
United Arab Emirates, Police 104w

Multifibre arrangement
495w

Multinational companies
EC action 108w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 513-5
Questions
Hazardous wastes, Imports 136w, 292w
ReChem International, Hazardous wastes 89w
Welsh Grand Committee 5-6

Museums & galleries
Bletchley Park Trust 52w

MV Braer
393w, 738-9w

MV Braer Inquiry
53-4w, 440w, 738-9w

MV Havkong
Shipping accidents 149w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis
480w, 669w
Medical research 460w, 641w
Northern Ireland 641w
Social security benefits 664-5w
Wales 460w

Myodil
(14:04:93) 924-30

National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting in Wales
see Welsh National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Council of Victim Support
222w

National Curriculum Council
545w

National debt
17w, 225-6w, 746w

National Engineering Laboratory
715w

National Health Service (Charges for Drugs & Appliances) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

National Health Service (Dental Services) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

National Health Service (Determination of Districts) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

National Health Service (Determination of Regions) Amendment Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

National Health Service (District Health Authorties) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

National Health Service (Optical Charges & Payments) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

National income
21w

National insurance benefits
74w

National insurance contributions
234w, 304-6w, 484-5
Earnings limits 168-9w, 302w
Self-employed 168w
Tax yields 169w

National Insurance Fund
Treasury grant 420-1w

National Library of Wales
Management 415w

National Loans Fund
Credit 478-9w

National lottery
482-3w
Lottery tickets 483w
Prize money 483w

National Lottery Etc Bill 1992/93
Questions
482-3w, 505, 952

National Museum of Wales
415w

National Office of Animal Health
243-4w

National parks authorities
349w

National Physical Laboratory
715w

National savings stock register
230-1w

National Transcommunications
Privatisation 689-90w

National Union of Rail Maritime & Transport Workers
Strikes 944-5

National Union of Students
155

National Union of Teachers
Conferences 946

National vocational qualifications
149-50

Nationality
Prisoners 615w

NATO
(14:04:93) 829-41

Natural Environment Research Council
12-3, 91w

Nature conservation
Birds 131w
Coastal areas 131w
Italy 293w
Squirrels 54w
Whales (02:04:93) 803-10

Navy
Redundancy 321w

Nazi war crimes
Channel Islands 685-6w

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Minister for Trade*
Questions
Arab boycott, Overseas trade 493w
Arms trade, United Arab Emirates 161w
Business, France 495-6w
Chemical Weapon Convention 159-60w

***Needham, Mr Richard**—continued*
Chemical weapons 406w
Commodity agreements, Rubber 496w
EC external trade, Malta 493w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Debts written off 760-1w
Export Intelligence Service, Consultants 210w
Export Intelligence Service, Pre Link 760w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 161-2w
Multifibre arrangement 495w
Overseas Projects Board 496w
Overseas trade, United Arab Emirates 161w
PERIFRA programme 403w
Postal services, Balance of payments 762w
Public contracts, EC law 553w
Regional selective assistance, Ross-on-Wye 406w
Wood, Overseas trade 161w

Negative equity
232w

***Nelson, Mr Anthony**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 876, 882, 886, 897-8
Questions
Alternative energy 486
Bank of England 225w
Bank of England, Annual reports 479w
Bank of England, Banking supervision 373w
Bank of England, Credit 478w
Banks, Small businesses 747-8w
Barlow Clowes, Bank of Credit & Commerce International 145w
Budget March 1993, Environment protection 486-7
Consumer expenditure 747w
Consumer expenditure, Fuels 17w, 374w
Council tax, Valuation 20w
Credit, EC countries 478w
Debts written off, Developing countries 144w
Economic & monetary union 145w
Economic analysis, Economic forecasting 371w
Equatorial Bank, Closures 145w
European central bank, Greater London 479-80w
European investment funds 536w
European Monetary Institute 536w
Exchange rate mechanism, Sterling 369w
Family expenditure survey 18w, 225w
Government securities 230-1w
Mortgages 371w
National income 21w
National Loans Fund, Credit 478-9w
Negative equity 232w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Interest rates 479w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Treaty on European Union 479w, 749w
Securities & Investments Board, Self-regulating organisations 749w
Sequestration of assets, Iraq 683w
Stamp duties 368w
Treasury, Computer privacy 684w
Treasury, Contracts for services 225w
Treasury, Management consultants 17w
UK trade with EC 749w
VAT 488
VAT, Fuels 367w, 488
VAT, Small businesses 370w
VAT, Tax burden 487-8

Network SouthEast
558w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Questions
Crime, Greater London 940-1
Single sex schools, School population 157w

Neurology
(31:03:93) 471-8

New University of Ulster
656-8w

Newbury
By election writs (14:04:93) 813
Electorate 34-6w

Newbury bypass
167w

Newcastle
Assisted places scheme 684-5w

Newport Gwent
Unemployment 10

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
Hospitals, Trafford (01:04:93) 529
Recess motions, Easter (01:04:93) 560-3
Questions
Business questions 505-10, 950-8
Business statements 504-5, 949-50
Departmental correspondence, Administrative delays 573w
Privy Council, Ethnic minorities 360w
Privy Council, Ethnic monitoring 360w
Privy Council, Higher civil servants 360w
Sittings of the House Select Committee 463w

Newtownabbey
Crime 396-7w
Police patrolling 397w

Next steps initiative
16, 332-4w

NHS
Administrative costs 614w
Baxter Healthcare 364w
Charitable trusts 22-30w
Dental services 240w
Energy costs 469w
Managers 236w, 471-2w

NHS administration
743-4w
Manpower 39-44w, 455-8w
Wales 455-8w

NHS finance
Hospices 470w
South East region 37-40w

NHS internal market
(31:03:93) 471-8

NHS Management Executive
Information 604-5w

NHS trusts
Ambulance services 181w
Leeds 603w
Pay 139w, 603w
Scotland 309w
Wales 6-7, 139w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Coastal Waters (Quality Standards) Bill, 1R (15:04:93) 960
Coastal Waters (Water Quality Standards) (Costs), Motion to introduce Bill negatived (14:04:93) 853-5
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 391
Local government services (16:04:93) 1020, 1024-31, 1034
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (14:04:93) 853-6
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 40
Questions
Council house sales 345-6w
Council tax, Valuation 346w
Grant maintained schools, Dyslexia 141
Local government borrowing 130w
Slaughterhouses, Inspections 248-50w
Standard spending assessments, Local education authorities 509w

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 366, 388
Questions
Animals, Poisoning 564w
Business questions 952-3
Comfrey, Health hazards 565w
Educational assessment, Somerset 151
Oil pollution control 327w

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Iraq (02:04:93) 735-41

Night shelters
Homelessness 132w

Noise
Broadmoor Hospital 672-3w
Special hospitals 363w

Non-departmental public bodies 202w
Public appointments 389-90w
Scotland 389-90w
Wales 267w

Non-domestic rates
Enterprise zones 528w

Non-Domestic Rating (No 2) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (01:04:93) 524

Non-fossil fuel obligation
50-1w, 404w

Non-governmental organisations 379w, 588w
Environment protection 152-3w

Norfolk
Job centres 92-3w
Water pollution 59w

***Norris, Mr Steve**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport*
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (02:04:93) 799-802
Ferries, Spain (02:04:93) 775-80
Questions
Aer Lingus, Government assistance 438-9w
Air France, Government assistance 439w
Air travel, Consumer protection 562-4w
Airlines, Government assistance 439w
Airlines, Licensing 297-9w
Airports, Airlines 355w
Bus services, Contracts 440w
Bus services, Passengers 558-9w
Bus services, Privatisation 1-2w, 559w
Buses, Greater London 559w
Buses, Road traffic 440w
Channel tunnel, Passengers 738w
Charter flights, Airports 355-6w
Crossrail, Cost effectiveness 1w
Crossrail, Railway safety 1w
Cycleways, Greater London 442w
Dept of Transport, Computer privacy 738w
Dept of Transport, Contracts for services 1w
Dept of Transport, Ethnic minorities 294w
Dept of Transport, Ethnic monitoring 294w
Dept of Transport, Higher civil servants 294w
Dept of Transport, Public appointments 560w
Dock workers 295-7w
Dock workers, Casual workers 294-6w
East London river crossing 560-1w
Exhaust emissions, Buses 560w
Ferries, Licensing 298w
Heathrow Airport, Air traffic 693-4w
Heathrow Airport, Passengers 694w
Helicopters, Rescue services 299w, 556w
Jubilee line 438w
Jubilee line, Construction 162w
London airports, Air traffic 694w
London Buses, Investment 691-2w
London Buses, Privatisation 438w

***Norris, Mr Steve**—continued*
London Regional Transport, Government grants 441w
M11, Road construction 693w
MV Braer Inquiry 738-9w
Pedestrian areas, Greater London 693w
Ports, EC grants & loans 165w
Priority routes, Greater London 2w
Public transport, Greater London 556w
Railway network, Private investment 438w
Railway transport 739w
River Thames, Water transport 559-60w
Road traffic, Greater London 555-6w
Road works, Croydon 167w
Road works, Greater London 557-8w
Road works, Southwark 437w
Traffic noise, Greater London 442w
Transport 739w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 440w
Transport policy, Greater London 694w
Travel cards, Greater London 442w

Norris Committee
see River Thames Working Group

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust 305w
Hospital ancillary staff 305w

North East region
Manufacturing industries 487

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 37-40w
Expenditure 473-4w

North Korea
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 82w, 685w, 822-3
Nuclear safeguards 484w, 583w
Nuclear weapons deployment 122w

North of England Regional Consortium 439w

North Wales 84w
Employment opportunities 406-7w
Radiotherapy 410w

North West region
Crime prevention 220-1w
Hospices 364w
Young offenders 220-1w

North West Thames Regional Health Authority 37-40w

Northern Ireland
Body searches 146w
Civil service agencies 449-50w
Company liquidations 636w
Cost per pupil 640w
Death 628w
Educational finance 640w
Electricity supply industry 274w
Electricity tariffs 274-5w
Employment discrimination 61-2w, 657-8w
Firearms certificates 449w
Foreign investment in UK 628-9w, 637-8w, 642-8w
Government assistance to industry 629w, 631w, 647-56w
Hill livestock allowances 449w
Housing associations 269-74w
Housing construction 269w
Infant mortality 627w
Invalidity benefits 632w
Life imprisonment 734-6w
Livestock 449w
Lobsters 274w
Local government elections (30:03:93) 327-9
Local government reform 634w
Lost working days 641w
Maps 657w

***Northern Ireland**—continued*
Ministry of Defence 505w
Mink 657w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 641w
Old people's homes 636-7w
Post Office 553w
Potatoes 443-8w, 655-6w
Prisoners 733w
Prisoners' dependants 629-30w
Public transport 631w
Pupil-teacher ratios 641w
Road construction 632w
Road salting & gritting 627w
Social Fund 671-2w
Squatting 630-1w
Student grants 638w
Student numbers 734w
Students 642w
Terrorism 396w, 401-2w, 635-6w, 732w
Tourism 635w
Trust ports 641w
Unemployment 637w
University finance 656-8w
USA 686w
VAT 395w
Wasting police time 395w
Young offenders 632w

Northern Ireland Child Support Agency 672w

Northern Ireland Court Service
Religion 427w

Northern Ireland Curriculum Council
Manpower 402w

Northern Ireland Customs & Excise Commissioners
Religion 372w

Northern Ireland district councils
Manpower 634w
Religion 275-6w

Northern Ireland Electricity 274w
Employment discrimination 61w

Northern Ireland health & social services boards
Pay incentives 276w
Religion 447-9w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Debt collection 631w
Direct labour departments 398-400w
Homelessness 273w
Housing associations 273w
Housing stock 397-8w
Rent arrears 631w
Waiting lists 269w, 630w

Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board
see Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Office
Civil servants' secondment 628w
Computer privacy 733-4w
Departmental correspondence 656w
Disabled workers 394w
Ethnic minorities 394w
Ethnic monitoring 394w
Higher civil servants 394-6w
Private investment 402w, 404w
Public appointments 641w
Women 394w

Northern Ireland Railways 631w
Religion 400-1w

Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Manpower 633-4w

Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company
Religion 401w

Northern Ireland Valuation & Lands Agency 402-3w

Northern region
Handicap benefits 421-2w
Income support 491-2w
Mucous membrane disease 422w

Norway
EC accession 581w

Nottingham
Civil service dispersal 537w
RECHAR 498-9w

Nuclear Electric
704w, 759w
Performance standards 493-4w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Contracts 704w
Magnox reactors 704w
Sellafield 680w

Nuclear non proliferation
379w
China 687w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 464w, 581-2w
Pakistan 464w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
46w, 379w, 464-5w, 485w, 507w, 580w, (02:04:93) 760-72
North Korea 82w, 685w, 822-3
Nuclear non proliferation 464w, 581-2w
Russia 741w

Nuclear power
703-4w, 759w
Consultants 703w
Costs 704w
Electricity generation 494w
Energy policy 51w
Energy review 704w

Nuclear power stations
Carbon dioxide 160-1w
Inspections 497w
Radioactive waste disposal 717-8w
Security industry 759w

Nuclear Powered Warships Safety Committee
195w

Nuclear safeguards
EC law 208w
North Korea 484w, 583w

Nuclear safety
Pressurised water reactors 703w
Sizewell B 703w

Nuclear submarines
Persian Gulf 569w
Shipbuilding 505w

Nuclear test ban
46w, 580w

Nuclear weapons
Commonwealth of Independent States 826-8
International Centre for Theoretical Physics 740w
Iraq 582w
Israel 580w
Middle East 740-1w
Pakistan 464w
South Africa 45w, 233w
Transport of radioactive materials 322-3w, 382w
Turkmenistan 464w

Nuclear weapons deployment
North Korea 122w

Nuclear weapons tests
203w
Australia (01:04:93) 645-52
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 645-52
Expenditure 16w, 569w
Exservicemen 539w
Lobbying 485w
South Africa 45w

Nuisance
Telephones 349

Nursery schools
Cost per pupil 437w

Nurses
Career structure 410w
Wales 410w

Nurses (Scotland) Act 1951
Questions
585w

Nutrition & health
Children 742w

Objects in lieu of tax
233w

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 892-4
Questions
Farmers, Departmental forms 568w
Glen Parva Youth Custody Centre 720w
Set-aside schemes, Weedkillers 564w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 26
Questions
Ports, Privatisation 640w
Ports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 640w
Standard spending assessments, Census of population 132-3w
Trust ports, Privatisation 641w

Obscene Publications Act 1959
Questions
113w

Obscenity
Scotland 700-2w
Sentencing 700-2w

Occupational pensions
British Rail 2-3w, 359w, 697w
Personal pensions 169w

Occupied territories
815-6
Israel 579-80w

Offenders
Greater Manchester 95-6w

Offensive weapons
719w
Greater Manchester 113w

Office of Electricity Regulation
51w

Office of Fair Trading
(14:04:93) 842-50

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
Disclosure of information 239w

Office of Public Service & Science
533w
Higher civil servants 533-4w
Private investment 331w

Office of Telecommunications
204-5w

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
see UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Office of UK Permanent Representative to EC
Civil servants' secondment 586w

Offices
Dept of Health 32w
Scottish Enterprise 393w

Official engagements
129w, 377w, 688w, 762w

Offshore safety
Procurators fiscal 590w

OFTEL
see Office of Telecommunications

Oil pollution
Fishing grounds 587w
Shipping 53-4w

Oil pollution control
327w, 568w

Old people's homes
Northern Ireland 636-7w
Per capita costs 636-7w
Wales 459w

Oldbury power station
759w

Olner, Mr Bill
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Community care 18-20

Olympic Games
Greater London 349-50w

One stop shop initiative
714-5w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Questions
Coal mine closures, Per capita costs 49-50w
Electricity distribution, France 50-1w
Electricity supply industry, Licensing 51w
Energy prices, VAT 211w

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 48-52
Questions
Set-aside schemes 564w
Travelling people, Trespass 289-90w

Open government
90w

Opencast mining
Coal reserves 406w
Manpower 405-6w
Planning permission 59w, 348w
Private investment 405-6w

Ophthalmic services
Children 362w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 849-50
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 41, 71-4
Questions
Courts, Information 525w
Dioxins, Derbyshire 290-1w
Foreign investment in UK 490
France, Foreign relations 812-3
Grant maintained schools, Amber Valley 150
Industrial production 947
Industrial production, Scotland 344
Languages education 155w
Local government staff, Manpower 309w
Multifibre arrangement 495w

Organ donors
(30:03:93) 158-9

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
159-60w

Organophosphorous pesticides
Sheep dipping 328-30w

Origin marking
Beef 566w

Orimulsion
(29:03:93) 25-125

Orthopaedics
Surgery 31w, 743w

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Ferries, Spain (02:04:93) 773-5
Questions
Road works, Croydon 167w

Out-patient clinics
Anaesthetics 466w

Out-patients
London Ambulance Service 600w

Overseas aid
Afghanistan 118w
Commonwealth of Independent States 826-8
Egypt 465w

Overseas investment
Income tax on investment incomes 226w

Overseas Projects Board
496w

Overseas students
Debt collection 582w
Fees & charges 65w
Iraq 582w, 683w
Student numbers 65w

Overseas trade
Arab boycott 493w
United Arab Emirates 161w
Wood 161w

Oxygen
Medical equipment 366w

Ozone
516w

Ozone layer
516w

Paediatrics
Hospital waiting lists 605-6w

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 494
Sellafield, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 680w

Page Committee
see London Ambulance Service Inquiry

Pakistan
Chieftain tanks 122w
Nuclear non proliferation 464w
Nuclear weapons 464w

Palace of Westminster
Blood donors 147w

Palestinians
580w
Peace negotiations 815-7

Paper
Ecolabelling 212-4w
Recycling 493w

Paracetamol
Suicide 237-8w

Paramedical staff
Ambulance services 309-10w

Parent & child
139-40

Parental responsibility
547w, (01:04:93) 564-83
Young offenders 722w

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
see Boundary Commission for England

Parliamentary constituencies
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency 356-7w
Scotland 312-3w

Parliamentary questions
Civil service agencies 170w

Parole Board
223w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Building industry, Merseyside 679w
Hong Kong, Civil service pensions 123w
Hong Kong, Civil service retirement 234w

Parry, Mr Robert—continued
Hong Kong, Civil service pensions 583w
Iran, Terrorism 575w
Ministers' domestic visits, Liverpool 377w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 485w
Nuclear power stations, Inspections 497w
Somalia, Immigration applications 484-5w
South Korea, Human rights 484w
South Korea, Ministers' visits abroad 484w, 687w
South Korea, US bases 484w
Unemployment, Liverpool 337-8w

Part-time education
Income support 702w

Part-time employment
Employment protection 108-9w
Manpower 596w
Pay 595-6w

Passengers
Bus services 558-9w
Channel tunnel 738w
Heathrow Airport 694w

Passenger's charter
163-5w, 359-60w

Pate de foie gras
564w

Patient's Charter
140w

Patients' rights
Broadmoor Hospital 672-3w
Special hospitals 363w

***Patnick, Mr Irvine**, Lord Commissioner of the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1042
London Ambulance Service (01:04:93) 684

***Patten, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Education*
Questions
Education, EC grants & loans 158w
Educational assessment, Somerset 151
Educational assessment, Special education 151
English education, Curriculum 545w
Further education colleges, Land acquisition 217w
Grant maintained schools 147-8
Grant maintained schools, School population 146-7
Mathematics education 143
Mathematics education, Educational standards 142
Mathematics education, Teachers 142-3
Mathematics education, Women 142
Parent & child 139-40
Primary education, Educational assessment 145-6
Religious education, Curriculum 153w
Teachers, Pay 153w, 352-3w
Technical education 149-50

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
M25 (01:04:93) 632-4, 636, 644

Pawsey, Mr James
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 385, 397-8
Questions
Corporal punishment, Schools 353w
English education, Curriculum 545w
Exports 369w
Fishing crews, Public order offences 152
Grant maintained schools, School population 146-7
Water & sewerage companies, Fences 673w

Pay
489
Family doctors 681-2w
Health service staff 366w, 471-2w, 605w
NHS trusts 139w, 603w

Pay—continued
Part-time employment 595-6w
Teachers 153w, 352-3w, 542-4w

Pay incentives
Army in Northern Ireland 325w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards 276w

Pay settlements
Health service staff 320w

Paymaster Agency
20w

Paymaster-General
20w

Peace negotiations
Angola 576w
Cyprus 583w
Israel 815-7
Middle East 573-4w
Palestinians 815-7

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 76-8, 111
Questions
Recycling, Supplementary credit approvals 285-8w

Pedestrian areas
Greater London 693w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
National lottery 482-3w
National lottery, Lottery tickets 483w
National lottery, Prize money 483w

Pension funds
Maxwell companies 494

Pension Law Review Committee
170-1w

Pensioner premium
Income support 421w

Pensioners
Concessionary fares 441-2w
Energy prices 421w
Housing benefits 77w
Invalid care allowances 703w
Means tested benefits 416-7w
Personal income 662w

Pensions
77w, 169-70w

PERIFRA programme
403w

Perinatal mortality
Burnley Pendle & Rossendale Health Authority 469-70w

Persian Gulf
Nuclear submarines 569w

Personal income
Pensioners 662w

Personal pensions
Occupational pensions 169w

Personal records
Taxpayers 748w

Personal tax allowances
17-8w, 230w, 483-4

Personal taxation
140-1w
Foreigners 19w

Peru
Democracy 824

Pest control
Badgers 110w, 138-9w, 245w, 268-9w

Pesticides
Environment protection 328w

Pesticides Safety Directorate
247-8w

Petroleum
Iraq 582w

Petroleum exploration
497w
Falkland Islands 380-1w
Tax reform 746-8w

Petroleum production
497w

Petroleum revenue tax
Tax reform 19w, 495-6, 746-8w

Pharmacists
Fees & charges 599w

Physical education
Child health 602-3w
Cornwall 157w
Primary education 353w
Secondary education 353w

Pickles, Mr Eric
Questions
Industrial diseases, Bronchitis 76-7w
Local government services, Contracts for services 55w
Primary education, Educational assessment 145

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1027, 1055-61

Pigeons
Armed forces 177w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Civil service agencies, Accountability (01:04:93) 526
Questions
Football Trust, Football pools 373w
House condition survey 510w
Housing Partnership Fund 349w
Motorway service areas 697w
Perinatal mortality, Burnley Pendle & Rossendale Health Authority 469-70w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 348w
Transport of animals 326w

Planning appeals
Legal costs 58w

Planning permission
Demolition 514-5w
Incinerators 413-4w
Manchester 514-5w
Opencast mining 59w, 348w

Plastics
Recycling 717w

Play
Children 63w

Plutonium
Carlisle Airport 716w
Transport of radioactive materials 440w, 716w

Pneumoconiosis
Industrial diseases benefits 659w

Poisoning
Animals 564w

Poland Hungary assistance for economic restructuring
705w

Police
Finance 719w
Greenwich 935
Gwent 7-8
Manpower 756-60w
Performance standards 932-4
Prisoner escorts 934

Police—continued
United Arab Emirates 104w
Urban Crime Fund 935-6
Wales 7-8, 95w, 218-9w, 722w
Wiltshire 722w

Police accountability
932-3

Police authorities
Budgeting 934-5
Crime 756-60w
Management 934-5
Public appointments 721w

Police Authority for Northern Ireland
395w

Police cautions
96-102w

Police civilians
Wales 95w

Police discipline
111-2w

Police firearms
Royal Ulster Constabulary 634-5w

Police interrogation
Prisoners 733w

Police national computer
Contracts for services 430-1w, 621-2w

Police patrolling
Newtownabbey 397w

Police protection
Royal family 222w

Police records
Shotgun certificates 751w

Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry
430w

Police Staff College
Contracts for services 619-20w

Police stations
Stoke Newington 719w

Police training
Racial attacks 110-1w

Police vehicles
383w

Political parties
Finance 44w, 492

Political refugees
Greater London 752w
Somalia 583-4w, 621-2w

Politics & government
South Africa 575w

Pollution monitoring
Shetland 393w

Pope, Mr Greg
Questions
Civil service recruitment, Records of achievement 532-3w, 537w

Pornography
113w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 836
Competition (14:04:93) 850
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 275
Hospitals, Trafford (01:04:93) 530
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 374
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 56, 68-9
Student grants, Legal profession (01:04:93) 533

Porter, Mr David
Debates etc.
Rural areas (01:04:93) 550-3
Questions
Business questions 506
Community action 93w
Employment opportunities, Business start-up scheme 93w
Export Intelligence Service, Consultants 210w
Job centres, Norfolk 92-3w
Legal aid scheme 5-6w
Local income tax 350w
Petroleum revenue tax, Tax reform 19w
Social security recipients, Energy prices 77w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 209-10w
VAT, Tax administration 19w
Workstart, East Anglia 93w

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Customs & Excise 374w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Local authorities 18w
Budget March 1993 368w
Budget March 1993, Investment 369w
Civil service dispersal, Nottingham 537w
Civil service recruitment, Records of achievement 537w
Economic forecasting 536-8w
Economic situation 370w
Exports 369w
Family income, Energy prices 477w
Foreign investment in UK 490
Government contracts, EC law 536w
Ministerial policy advisors 369w
National insurance contributions 484-5
Pay 489
Public finance 229w, 480w
Public sector borrowing requirement 480w
Treasury, Public appointments 535w
VAT, Fuels 489-90

Portland Young Offender Institution
725w

Ports
Belfast Airport 640w
EC grants & loans 165w
Greenock 63-4w
Immigration officers 726w
Privatisation 640w

Ports (Northern Ireland) Order 1993
Questions
640w

Portsmouth
Assisted areas 205w

Post Office
762w
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 653-68
Management consultants 762w
Northern Ireland 553w
Religion 553w

Post office closures
208w

Post Office Counters
208w, (01:04:93) 653-68

Postal services
Balance of payments 762w
Dept of Social Security 170w
EC action 554w

Potatoes
Agricultural subsidies 565-6w
Northern Ireland 443-8w, 655-6w

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 36
Questions
Redundancy, Wales 84w

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc.
Yugoslavia, War crimes (01:04:93) 543-8
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 820-1

Power stations
Energy conservation 713w

Pre Link
Export Intelligence Service 760w

Pregnant women
Prisoner escorts 431w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Questions
Advisory bodies, Public appointments 689-90w
Aerospace industry, Government grants 404w
Aerospace industry, Innovation 554w
Baxter Healthcare, NHS 364w
EC external trade, Malta 493w
Inheritance tax, Access to countryside 227-8w
Inheritance tax, Tax allowances 226-7w
Manufacturing industries, Civil servants' secondment 706w
Railway track, Repairs & maintenance 299w

Pre-payment certificates
236w

Pre-school education
140-1, 156w
Greater London 543-4w
School population 140

Prescription charges exemptions
178w, 362w

Prescription drugs
Family doctors 669-70w
GP fundholders 669-70w

Prescriptions
Expenditure 361-2w
Family doctors 598w

Preserved railways
Railways Bill 1992/93 696w

Pressurised water reactors
Nuclear safety 703w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989
Questions
721-2w
Crime prevention 429w

Preventive medicine
Family doctors 29-30w
Wales 416w

Price increases
Energy prices 946-7

Price Waterhouse
17w, 48w, 78-81w, 92w, 114-8w, 176w, 178w, 346-7w, 416w, 706-12w, 762w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
Child health 602w
Child health, Physical education 602-3w
Child patients 602w
Child psychiatrists, Manpower 603w
Child safety 605w
Child safety, Expenditure 606w
Computers in National Health Service, Expenditure 234-5w
Female circumcision 603w
GP fundholders 236-7w, 607w
Hepatitis 604w
Hospital waiting lists, Death 605w
Hospitals, Fees & charges 612w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 671w
Medical education, Student numbers 548w
NHS Management Executive, Information 604-5w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn—continued
Nutrition & health, Children 742w
Paediatrics, Hospital waiting lists 605-6w
Special health authorities, Expenditure 603-4w

Primary education
Cost per pupil 348, 437w
Educational assessment 145-6
Educational standards 157-8w
Languages education 65w, 266w
Physical education 353w
Pupil-teacher ratios 551w
Scotland 348

Primary health care
Greater London 33w

Prime Minister
Civil service manpower 377-8w
Public appointments 465w

Prime Minister's questions
465w

Priority routes
Greater London 2w

Prison accommodation
617-9w

Prison education services
Contracts for services 621w, 752w
Young offenders 724w

Prison overcrowding
Prison rules 615-6w

Prison population
617-9w
Verne Prison 725w

Prison rules
Prison overcrowding 615-6w

Prison sentences
Scotland 151-2w
Women 151-2w

Prison Service Agency
385w

Prison Service Union
Trade union recognition 117w

Prison staff
Employment protection 111w
Verne Prison 725w

Prison visitors
Greenock 701w
Handicapped 701w

Prison visits
Wandsworth Prison 724-5w

Prisoner escorts
Contracts for services 750w
Police 934
Pregnant women 431w

Prisoners
Children in care 726-8w
Drug crimes 615w
Educational assessment 724w
Ethnic minorities 616w
Israel 580w
Nationality 615w
Northern Ireland 733w
Police interrogation 733w

Prisoners & Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
(29:03:93) 128

Prisoners' dependants
Northern Ireland 629-30w
Social security benefits 629-30w

Prisoners of war
Compensation 173w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 173w

Prisons
Guard dogs 722-3w

Private companies
Employment discrimination 657-8w

Private investment
Dept for Education 351w
Dept of Health 365-6w
Dept of National Heritage 483w
Dept of Social Security 421w
Dept of the Environment 519w
Dept of Transport 355w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 379-80w
Home Office 382w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 343w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 326w
Ministry of Defence 322w
Northern Ireland Office 402w, 404w
Office of Public Service & Science 331w
Opencast mining 405-6w
Railway network 438w, 695w
Scottish Office 387-8w
Transport infrastructure 5w
Treasury 374w
Welsh Office 414w

Private rented housing
Domestic appliances 131-2w, 731w

Privatisation
Belfast Airport 639w
British Rail 2-5w, 162-3w, 695-6w, (14:04:93) 923
British Technology Group 714w
Bus services 1-2w, 559w
Drivers Vehicles & Operators Information Technology 2w, 693w
Electrical Equipment Certification Management Board 334w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 760-1w
London Buses 438w
National Transcommunications 689-90w
Ports 640w
PSA Building Management 56w
Railway freight transport 696w
Red Star 3w
Trust ports 641w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 405w
Vehicle Inspectorate 560w
Water supply industry 346

Privy Council
Disabled workers 360w
Ethnic minorities 360w
Ethnic monitoring 360w
Higher civil servants 360w
Women 360w

Prize money
National lottery 483w

Procedure Select Committee
(31:03:93) 469

Procurators fiscal
Offshore safety 590w

Professional qualifications
Agency nurses 585w
Midwives 318w

Prohibition notices
Industrial noise 341-2w

Property development
Bourn (16:04:93) 1083-90

Property Services Agency
56w

Property transfer
Armed forces housing 176w
County Hall 730w
Medomsley Prison 723w

Proportional representation
House of Lords reform (31:03:93) 357-9

Prosecutions
200-1w
Industrial health & safety 339-40w
Law of war 173-4w

Prosecutions*—*continued
Magistrates' courts 6-12w
Wasting police time 395w

"Prospects for Coal White Paper"
(29:03:93) 25-125

Protection of Animals Act 1911
Questions
751w

PSA Building Management
Privatisation 56w

Psychogeriatrics
Hospital beds 360-1w, 457-60w
Wales 457-60w

Public appointments
154-5, 201-2w
Advisory bodies 689-90w
Business 285w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 534w
Dept for Education 551w
Dept of Employment 593w
Dept of Health 466-7w
Dept of National Heritage 481w
Dept of Social Security 661w
Dept of the Environment 729w
Dept of Trade & Industry 705w
Dept of Transport 560w
District health authorities 364w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 581w
Grimsby & Scunthorpe Health Authority 187w
Handicapped 89w
Home Office 624w
London East Training & Enterprise Council 429w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 526w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 566-7w
Ministry of Defence 506w
Non-departmental public bodies 389-90w
Northern Ireland Office 641w
Police authorities 721w
Prime Minister 465w
Regional health authorities 609-11w
Scottish Office 699w
Treasury 535w
Urban Regeneration Agency 347w
Wales 89w
Welsh Development Agency 136-7w
Welsh Office 414w

Public bodies
Accountability 307w
Scotland 307w

Public contracts
EC law 553w

Public expenditure
Agriculture 49w
Scotland 306-7w

Public finance
229w, 480w

Public order offences
Fishing crews 152-4

Public petitions
A92 (31:03:93) 470
British Rail (14:04:93) 923
Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education (29:03:93) 130
Community nurses (31:03:93) 470
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (29:03:93) 129
House of Commons procedure (31:03:93) 469

Public Record Office
198-200w

Public sector borrowing requirement
480w
Interest rates 479w
Treaty on European Union 479w, 749w

Public sector housing
Fire prevention 413w
Government grants 278-82w

Public sector housing*—*continued
Housing construction 677-8w

Public sector housing sales
Armed forces housing 508w, 569-70w

Public service
Race Relations Act 1976 431w

Public service obligation grant
Railway travel 562w

Public service vehicles
Motor vehicle testing 558w

Public transport
Greater London 556w
Northern Ireland 631w

Public utilities
Companies political contributions 114w

Publications
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 185w

Publicity
Research councils 91w
Science & technology 91w

Pupil exclusions
547w

Pupil-teacher ratios
Northern Ireland 641w
Primary education 551w
Scotland 586w
Secondary education 551w
Wales 413w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Questions
Business questions 950-1
Health physics, Telecommunications technology 670w
Local government finance, Hydrocarbon oil duties 516w
NHS, Energy costs 469w

Pwllheli Harbour (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
3R* (30:03:93) 139

Pyramid selling
206w

Pyrrolizidine alkaloids
565w

Quality control
Consultants 292w

Queen's University Belfast
402w, 656-8w
Religion 401w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Handicapped 17-8
Conditions of employment 107w
Conditions of employment, Dismissal 106w
Multinational companies, EC action 108w
Part-time employment, Employment protection 108-9w
Unfair dismissal 107w
VAT, Fuels 479-80
Vocational training, Equal opportunities 594w

Race relations
Schools 157w

Race Relations Act 1976
Questions
Public service 431w

Racial attacks
157w
Police training 110-1w

Racial discrimination
752w

Racial harassment
Local government social services 183w

Radiation protection
Wales 681w

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
Committee on Safety of Medicines, Disclosure of information 599w
Drug hazards 600-1w
Drugs, Licensing 599w

Radio Authority
63w

Radio engineering
Air force 173w

Radio frequencies
Hospital radio 63w

Radio programmes
Hazardous wastes 277w

Radioactive Substances Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (16:04:93) 1082

Radioactive waste disposal
277w
Amersham International 681w
AWE Cardiff 681w
Nuclear power stations 717-8w
Sellafield 531w

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee
277w

Radioactive wastes
Water pollution 52-3w

Radiotherapy
North Wales 410w

Radon gas
Health hazards 39w, 90w, 520-1w
Wales 90w

RAF Leuchars
Sea rescue 506-7w

Rail Regulator
162-3w

Railtrack
3-5w, 162-3w

Railway fares
British Rail 441-2w
Travel cards 696w

Railway freight transport
Government grants 695w
Management consultants 4w
Privatisation 696w
Scotland 338

Railway Heritage Trust
696w

Railway industry
Research 4w

Railway land
Land ownership & tenure 4-5w

Railway network
Channel tunnel 298w, 439w, (02:04:93) 795-802
Heathrow Airport 165w
Private investment 438w, 695w

Railway safety
Barking 440w
Crossrail 1w

Railway stations
Greater London 442w
Railway workers 442w

Railway track
Lancashire 299w
Repairs & maintenance 299w

Railway transport
739w
Inverclyde 338

Railway transport*—*continued
Rural areas 338
Strikes 492

Railway travel
Public service obligation grant 562w
South East region 558w

Railway workers
Railway stations 442w

Railways Bill 1992/93
Questions
Preserved railways 696w

Rain forests
Forest protection 360w
Malaysia 825

Rape
Bosnia-Herzegovina 576w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 877-9
Questions
Israel, Peace negotiations 816
VAT, Charities 488-9

Ravenscraig Steelworks
Redundancy 342-3

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Housing (01:04:93) 693-9, 710
Questions
Business questions 507-8
Police, Greenwich 935

Recess motions
Easter (01:04:93) 525-63

RECHAR
137w
East Midlands 498-9w
Nottingham 498-9w

ReChem International
136w, 292w, 674w
Air pollution 137-8w
Hazardous wastes 89w

Recorders
Ethnic minorities 343w
Women 343w

Records of achievement
Civil service recruitment 532-3w, 537w

Recycling
716-7w
Bottles 716w
Expenditure 276-7w
Germany 716w
Paper 493w
Plastics 717w
Supplementary credit approvals 285-8w

Red Cross
see International Red Cross

Red Star
163-5w
Privatisation 3w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Documents, Points of order (29:03:93) 23
House of Commons questions, Points of order (14:04:93) 852
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 32, 33, 38, 86, 115
Questions
Ammunition, Uranium 193w
Archaeology, Local government staff 679w
Armed forces, Pigeons 177w
AWE Burghfield 57w
Family expenditure survey 18w, 225w
Food additives, Minerals 47-8w
Forensic science, Criminal investigation 429w
Health authorities, Directors 465w
Heart diseases, Hospital waiting lists 32w

Redmond, Mr Martin*—*continued
NHS, Charitable trusts 22-30w
PSA Building Management, Privatisation 56w

Redundancy
Navy 321w
Ravenscraig Steelworks 342-3
Wales 84w

Redundant mineworkers' payments scheme
202w

Redwood, Mr John, Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1011-9, 1021, 1023, 1032, 1042-3, 1056, 1076, 1079-82
Questions
Council tax, Residential care 675w
Council tax, Tax collection 678w
County Hall, Property transfer 730w
Dept of the Environment, Private investment 519w
Enterprise zones 528-9w
Enterprise zones, Capital allowances 528w
PSA Building Management, Privatisation 56w
Regional arts boards 531w
Road construction, Inner city areas 673-4w

Reed Committee
see Mentally Disordered Offenders Services Review

Referenda
Treaty on European Union 156
Western Sahara 485w

Refugees
Community care grants 169w

Refuges
Wales 266w

Reg(EURATOM)3227/76
208w

Regional arts boards
531w, 691w
Arts finance 691w

Regional government
377w

Regional health authorities
Public appointments 609-11w

Regional planning & development
Hackney 729w
South East region 132w

Regional selective assistance
Ross-on-Wye 406w

Registers of Scotland
see Dept of the Registers of Scotland

Registration of births deaths & marriages
Microforms 240w

Regulatory system
Insolvency practitioners 494-5w

Rehabilitation
Community care 612-3w

Rehabilitation centres
Community care 612w
Finance 611w

Reid, Dr John
Questions
Industrial training schemes, Lanarkshire 343
USA, Diplomatic service 485w

Religion
BBC Northern Ireland 735w
Belfast Airport 401w
Citybus 401w
Civil service 275w
Enterprise Ulster 633w

Religion*—*continued
Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland 627w
Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland 633w
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland 671w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland 275w
Inland Revenue 372w
Local Enterprise Development Unit 401w
Northern Ireland Court Service 427w
Northern Ireland Customs & Excise Commissioners 372w
Northern Ireland district councils 275-6w
Northern Ireland health & social services boards 447-9w
Northern Ireland Railways 400-1w
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company 401w
Post Office 553w
Queen's University Belfast 401w
Ulsterbus 401w
Youth Council for Northern Ireland 401w

Religious discrimination
Egypt 540w

Religious education
Curriculum 153-4w

Relocation of employees
Civil service agencies 16
Dept of Trade & Industry 761w

Remand Contract Unit
Civil service manpower 726w

REME static workshops
193-4w

Rent arrears
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 631w

Rent increases
Business expansion scheme 438w

Rented housing
Fires 623-4w
Housing associations 745w
Wales 745w

Rents to mortgages scheme
Secured loans 530w

Repetitive strain injury
Dept of Social Security local offices 75-6w

Republic of Ireland
165w
Electricity interconnectors 716w
Terrorism 496, 538-9w

Rescue services
Helicopters 299w, 556w

Research
Flood control 12-3
Railway industry 4w

Research councils
Publicity 91w

Research finance
EC framework programme 684w
Energy research 206w
Industrial research 13
Social science research 215w

Residential allowance
Social security benefits rules 492w

Residential care
Alcoholism 471w
Council tax 203w, 288-9w, 675w
Drug abuse 471w
Social security benefits 423-4w
Wales 411w, 459-60w

Resignations
Magistrates 426w

Respite care
Wales 459w

Restart programme
105-6w, 252-6w
Attendance 334-5w
Contracts for services 335-6w

Retirement age
661-3w
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 686-92
Sweden 663w
USA 663w

Retirement pensions
Expenditure 664w
Social security benefits uprating 664w
Social security payments 77-8w, 153
Social security recipients 661-4w
Social security reciprocal agreements 171w

Richards, Mr Rod
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 43
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 518
Questions
Ancient Monuments Board for Wales 462w
Connah's Quay power station 4
Council tax, Wales 462-4w
Council tenants, Local government social services 682w
Down's syndrome, Special education 87w
Down's syndrome, Wales 261-2w
Economic situation, Wales 84w
Employment opportunities, North Wales 406-7w
Government departments, Contracts for services 91w
Preventive medicine, Wales 416w
Water supply disconnections, Hepatitis 457w
Water supply disconnections, Wales 407-8w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 858
Points of order (31:03:93) 354
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Scotland 305w
USA, GATT 821-2

***Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm**, Secretary of State for Defence*
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ministerial statements (14:04:93) 829-41

Right to Know Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Money res* (14:04:93) 922

River Clyde
Dredging 591-2w

River Forth
Bridges 342

River Humber (Upper Burcom Cooling Works) Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

River Thames
Bridges 560-1w
Water transport 559-60w

River Thames Working Group
559-60w

Road construction
Construction costs 632w
Contracts 358-9w
Fife 341-2
Inner city areas 673-4w
Llantarnam bypass 409w
M11 693w
Northern Ireland 632w
Scotland 388-9w

Road safety
Local government departments 166w

Road salting & gritting
Northern Ireland 627w

Road signs
M4 409w
Severn bridge 558w

Road traffic
Buses 440w
Greater London 555-6w

Road traffic control
Greater London 355w
Traffic Commissioners 691w

Road works
Croydon 167w
Greater London 557-8w
Southwark 437w
West Cumbria 168w

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Questions
Business & the Environment Advisory Committee 676w
Corporation tax, Tax rates & bands 481-2

***Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn**, Minister of State for Wales*
Questions
Ancient Monuments Board for Wales 462w
Assisted areas, Llanelli 4-5
"Case for University Colleges" 266w
Class sizes, Wales 267w
Coal mine closures, Wales 139w
Cost per pupil, Wales 6
Crewe-Holyhead railway line 84w
Down's syndrome, Special education 87w
Educational assessment, Schools & parents 268w
Languages education, Primary education 266w
Llantarnam Abbey 409w
Local government reform, South Wales 9-10
M4, Road signs 409w
National Library of Wales, Management 415w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Wales 413w
School buildings, Arson 412w
School buildings, Vandalism 412w
Tourism, Wales 460w
Tourists, Wales 461w
Training & enterprise councils, Wales 139-40w
Unemployment, Gwynedd 1-2
Unemployment, Wales 2
Village schools, Wales 6
Welsh language, Children 454-6w
Welsh language, Languages education 265w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 301, 303, 312-3, 320-3
House of Commons divisions, Points of order (15:04:93) 1000-1
Questions
Israel, Peace negotiations 816-7

Robertson, Mr Raymond S
Questions
Dept of the Registers of Scotland, Performance standards 316w
Devolution, Scotland 308w
School administration, Scotland 315-6w
Scottish Grand Committee 339
Scottish Office Pensions Agency 318w
Scottish Record Office 317w

Robinson, Mr Mark
Questions
Teachers, Pay 352-3w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Belfast Harbour 629w
Company liquidations, Northern Ireland 636w
Death, Northern Ireland 628w

***Robinson, Mr Peter**—continued*
Firearms certificates, Northern Ireland 449w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 628-9w, 637-8w
Gaelic Athletic Association, Discrimination 638-9w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 629w, 631w
Housing, Belfast 732-3w
Infant mortality, Northern Ireland 627w
Invalidity benefits, Northern Ireland 632w
Local government reform, Employment opportunities 634w
Lost working days 593w
Lost working days, Northern Ireland 641w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Rent arrears 631w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Waiting lists 630w
Old people's homes, Per capita costs 636-7w
Prisoners, Police interrogation 733w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Northern Ireland 641w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 551w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Scotland 586w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Wales 413w
Road construction, Construction costs 632w
Road salting & gritting, Northern Ireland 627w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police firearms 634-5w
Sexual offences, Community service orders 640w
Social security benefits, Prisoners' dependants 629-30w
Sports Council for Northern Ireland 633-4w
Squatting, Housing estates 630-1w
Student grants, Northern Ireland 638w
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 734w
Terrorism, Arrests 732w
Terrorism, Death 635-6w
Tourism, Northern Ireland 635w
Ulster Museum, Attendance 402w
Unemployment, Belfast 637w
Young offenders, Northern Ireland 632w

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Debates etc.
Intelligence services (29:03:93) 131-2
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 390, 402
Questions
Cyprus, Peace negotiations 583w
Homelessness, Night shelters 132w
Local government social services, Racial harassment 183w
Police training, Racial attacks 110-1w
Schools, Race relations 157w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Drivers Vehicles & Operators Information Technology, Privatisation 693w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 205, 208, 275
Oral question time point of order (29:03:93) 10
Questions
Hong Kong, China 819
Local government reform, Wales 86w

Rolling stock
4w
Repairs & maintenance 3w

Romania
Intercountry adoption 363-4w

Romanian Adoption Committee
363-4w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
Higher education 436w
Higher education, Tuition fees 216-7w, 436w
Mathematics education 143
Nursery schools, Cost per pupil 437w
Personal tax allowances 230w, 483-4

Ross, Mr Ernie
Questions
Israel, Peace negotiations 816

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 281, 286, 288, 322
Questions
A75, Dual carriageways 350-2
Bus services, Manpower 631w
Diplomatic service, EC countries 378-9w
Driving licences, Civil service agencies 449-50w
Employment discrimination, Private companies 657-8w
Employment opportunities, Londonderry 655w
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland, Manpower 633-4w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 642-8w
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, Manpower 627w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 647-56w
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, Manpower 627w
Life imprisonment, Homicide 734-6w
Maps, Northern Ireland 657w
Ministry of Defence, Northern Ireland 505w
Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, Manpower 402w
Northern Ireland district councils, Manpower 634w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing stock 397-8w
Northern Ireland Valuation & Lands Agency 402-3w
Potatoes, Northern Ireland 443-8w, 655-6w
Religion, BBC Northern Ireland 735w
Religion, Belfast Airport 401w
Religion, Civil service 275w
Religion, Enterprise Ulster 633w
Religion, Fair Employment Tribunal for Northern Ireland 627w
Religion, General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland 671w
Religion, Inland Revenue 372w
Religion, Local Enterprise Development Unit 401w
Religion, Northern Ireland Court Service 427w
Religion, Northern Ireland Customs & Excise Commissioners 372w
Religion, Northern Ireland district councils 275-6w
Religion, Northern Ireland health & social services boards 447-9w
Religion, Northern Ireland Railways 400-1w
Religion, Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company 401w
Religion, Post Office 553w
Religion, Queen's University Belfast 401w
Religion, Ulsterbus 401w
Religion, Youth Council for Northern Ireland 401w
Shotgun certificates, Police records 751w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 401-2w
Terrorism, Republic of Ireland 496
VAT, Fuels 480

Ross-on-Wye
Regional selective assistance 406w

"Rough Sleepers Initiative Consultation Paper"
530w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 458
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 294
Questions
Integrated administration & control system 110w
Manufacturing planning & implementation scheme 51-2w
National Insurance Fund, Treasury grant 420-1w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 172-3, 183, 203, 221, 234, 301-12, 317, 321, 323
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 42, 83-5
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 518
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 137w
Fires, Rented housing 623-4w
Local government reform, South Wales 10
Source Wales 85w

Royal Armouries
Leeds 119w

Royal British Legion
740w

Royal Commission on Ancient & Historical Monuments in Wales
see Ancient & Historical Monuments in Wales Royal Commission

Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England
see Historical Monuments of England Royal Commission

Royal family
Police protection 222w

Royal Irish Regiment
325w

Royal Mail
(01:04:93) 653-68

Royal Marsden Hospital
Repairs & maintenance 240-1w

Royal Military College of Science
12w

Royal Military Police
14w

Royal parks
Fees & charges 481w
Management 481-2w

Royal Parks Agency
354w, 481-2w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Disabled workers 146w
Legal representation 395w
Police firearms 634-5w

Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast
Hospital doctors 62w

Rubber
Commodity agreements 496w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Questions
Drug abuse, Residential care 471w
Drug abuse, Social services 470w
Emergency services, Helicopters 469w
Habitual offenders 617w
Immigration applications 101-2w
London Fire & Civil Defence Authority, Contracts for services 723-4w
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry 616w
Medomsley Prison, Property transfer 723w
Prison overcrowding, Prison rules 615-6w
Prison population 617-9w
Prison staff, Employment protection 111w

Ruddock, Ms Joan—continued
Prisoner escorts, Pregnant women 431w
Prisoners, Children in care 726-8w
Prisoners, Drug crimes 615w
Prisoners, Ethnic minorities 616w
Prisoners, Nationality 615w
Prisons, Guard dogs 722-3w
Wolds Remand Prison, Codes of practice 614w

Rugby
South Africa 124-5w

Rural areas
(01:04:93) 550-3
Class sizes 155w
Railway transport 338
Water charges 306w

Russia
Foreign policy 574w, (02:04:93) 781-7
Foreign relations 811
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 741w

Rutherglen Maternity Hospital
341

S4C
Television viewers 482w

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Arachnoiditis, Back pain (14:04:93) 926-30
Deviance & behaviour disorders (02:04:93) 756-9
London Ambulance Service (01:04:93) 679-85
Mid Cheshire Hospital NHS Trust (02:04:93) 749-52
Walton Centre for Neurology & Neurosurgery NHS Trust (31:03:93) 475-8
Questions
AIDS, Bromley 186-7w
AIDS support grant, London boroughs 613-4w
Ambulance services, Manpower 363w
Anaesthetics, Out-patient clinics 466w
Asthma, Medical research 470w
Cancer, Medical research 468w
Child health, Physical education 602-3w
Community health councils, Expenditure 361w
Computers in National Health Service, Expenditure 234-5w
Computers in National Health Service, Wessex Regional Health Authority 608w
Cot deaths 671w
Death rate, Health authorities 471-2w
Dept of Health, Computer privacy 605w
Dept of Health, Contracts for services 236w
Dept of Health, Ethnic minorites 178w
Dept of Health, Ethnic monitoring 178-80w
Dept of Health, Management consultants 178w
Dept of Health, Offices 32w
Dept of Health, Private investment 365-6w
Dept of Health, Public appointments 466-7w
District health authorities 35-6w
District health authorities, Expenditure 744-5w
Domestic accidents, Carbon monoxide 242w
Electorate, Newbury 34-6w
Emergency services, Helicopters 469w
Female circumcision 603w
Food hygiene, EC countries 182w
Food poisoning, Inquiries 181-2w
Health authorities, Directors 465w
Health physics, Telecommunications technology 670w
Health services, Ethnic minorities 235w
Heart diseases, Hospital waiting lists 32w
Heart diseases, Surgery 181w
Hepatitis 604w
Hepatitis, Doctors 32w
Hepatitis, Screening 31w

Sackville, Mr Tom*—*continued
Hip replacements 607w
Hospices, NHS finance 470w
Hospital waiting lists, Death 605w
Hospitals, Fees & charges 612w
In vitro fertilisation, Waltham Forest 236w
Knee replacements 743w
London Ambulance Service 600w
London Ambulance Service, Out-patients 600w
Meningitis, Vaccination 362-3w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 669w
NHS, Administrative costs 614w
NHS, Charitable trusts 22-30w
NHS, Energy costs 469w
NHS, Managers 236w, 471-2w
NHS administration 743-4w
NHS finance, South East region 37-40w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 473-4w
Nutrition & health, Children 742w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys, Disclosure of information 239w
Orthopaedics, Surgery 31w, 743w
Paediatrics, Hospital waiting lists 605-6w
Paracetamol, Suicide 237-8w
Perinatal mortality, Burnley Pendle & Rossendale Health Authority 469-70w
Radon gas, Health hazards 39w
Registration of births deaths & marriages, Microforms 240w
Royal Marsden Hospital, Repairs & maintenance 240-1w
Salmonella 182w
Special health authorities, Expenditure 603-4w
Vaccination 188-92w
Wessex Regional Health Authority, Audit 184-6w
Wessex Regional Health Authority, Departmental correspondence 608w

Safer cities scheme
220-1w, 623w

Safety equipment
Cycling 738w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim*, *Minister for Industry
Questions
Aerospace industry 554w
KONVER programme 713w

St Helena
Motor vehicles 581w

St John Ambulance Association & Brigade
179w

St Pancras
298w
Channel tunnel 439w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 964, 976-7, 984
Questions
Business questions 506-7, 953-4
Nuclear power, Energy policy 51w
Part-time employment, Manpower 596w
Part-time employment, Pay 595-6w
Petroleum exploration 497w
Petroleum production 497w
Petroleum revenue tax, Tax reform 746-8w
Scottish Homes 150w
THORP 50w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 440w, 716w
Treaty on European Union, Denmark 817

Salmonella
182w

Sanctions
Montenegro 825-6
Serbia 825-6, 945-6
Yugoslavia 577w, 826

Schizophrenia
Medical research 670w
Mental health services 670w

Schizophrenia*—*continued
Mental patients 611w
Social security benefits 666w
World Health Organisation 611w

School administration
Local government reform 543w
Scotland 315-6w

School attendance
Computer applications 158w

School buildings
Arson 412w
Gordon 307w
Repairs & maintenance 154-5w, 348-9
Vandalism 412w

School Examinations & Assessment Council
215w

School fees
Assisted places scheme 431-5w

School governors
Dismissal 156w

School population
Grant maintained schools 65-6w, 146-7
Pre-school education 140
Single sex schools 157w

School Teachers' Review Body
352-3w

Schools
Capital investment 414-6w
Corporal punishment 154w, 353w
Race relations 157w
Wales 414-6w

Schools & parents
Educational assessment 268w

Science & Engineering Research Council
91w

Science & technology
Publicity 91w

Science & technology policy
90-1w

Science & technology research
EC grants & loans 535w

Science budget
12-3

Scotland
A1 587-8w
Access to countryside 586-7w
Acute beds 311-2w
Agency nurses 585w
Ambulance services 309-10w
Armed forces discharges 572w
Armed forces housing 572w
Badgers 148w, 313w
Beef premiums 308w
Bone marrow disorders 585w
Community care 305-6w, 590-1w
Contracts for services 592w
Council housing 386w
Council tax 151w
Craft industries 385w
Cream 589w
Day care of children 588w
Dental services 699w
Devolution 308w, 339-40
EC Committee of the Regions 306w
Empty housing 150w
Environment protection 152-3w
Fertility 745-6w
Foreign investment in UK 524w
Grant maintained schools 305w
Health service staff 320w, 588w
Hill livestock allowances 521-2w
Hospital ancillary staff 309w
Hospital closures 700w
Industrial production 344, 350
Labour history 344-5
Legal aid scheme 319-20w, 337
Legislation 340
Livestock 522w

Scotland*—*continued
Local government constituencies 318-9w
Local government reform 307w, 345-7, 584-5w
Local government staff 309w
Manufacturing industries 350
Maternity services 341
Mental health services 312w, 521w
Midwives 149w, 318w
Mink 590w
NHS trusts 309w
Non-departmental public bodies 389-90w
Obscenity 700-2w
Parliamentary constituencies 312-3w
Primary education 348
Prison sentences 151-2w
Public bodies 307w
Public expenditure 306-7w
Pupil-teacher ratios 586w
Railway freight transport 338
Road construction 388-9w
School administration 315-6w
Severe hardship provision 488-9w
Sewage 387w
Smoke alarms 320w
University finance 344-5
Water charges 306w
Water pollution 522-4w
Water supply industry 309w
Youth unemployment 592w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas*, *Minister for Social Security and Disabled People
Questions
Community care grants, Refugees 169w
Community care grants, Smoke alarms 304w
Disability (Grants) Bill 1992/93 488w
Disability living allowance, Administrative delays 300w, 490-1w
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 489w
Disability living allowance, Warrington 76w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Repetitive strain injury 75-6w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 661w
Handicap benefits, Medical appeal tribunals 421-2w
Independent Living Extension Fund 420w
Industrial diseases benefits, Ceramic industries 660w
Industrial diseases benefits, Coal mining 659-61w
Industrial diseases benefits, Pneumoconiosis 659w
Invalid care allowances, Energy prices 702-3w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 418w
Mobility allowance, Social security claims 418-9w
Schizophrenia, Social security benefits 666w
Social Fund, Judicial review 666w
Social Fund, Stoke on Trent North 172w
Social security benefits, Myalgic encephalomyelitis 664-5w
Social security claims, Mucous membrane disease 422w
"Social Security Research Yearbook 1991/92" 661w

Scott Inquiry
see Arms to Iraq Inquiry

Scottish Agricultural Science Agency
Performance standards 317w

Scottish Ambulance Service
309-10w

Scottish Arts Council
385w

Scottish Assembly
340

Scottish Enterprise
588w
Hong Kong 393w

***Scottish Enterprise**—continued*
Offices 393w

Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency
Performance standards 314w

Scottish Grand Committee
339-40

Scottish health boards
309w

Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
316w

Scottish Homes
150w

Scottish Natural Heritage
586-7w

Scottish Nuclear
493-4w

Scottish Office
586w, 699w
Cash limits 152w, 317w
Private investment 387-8w
Public appointments 699w

Scottish Office Pensions Agency
318w

Scottish Prison Service
314-5w

Scottish Record Office
317w

Screening
Breast cancer 137w
Hepatitis 31w, 87w, 259w

Sea King helicopters
720w

Sea pollution
Shetland 393w

Sea rescue
Air force bases 506w
RAF Leuchars 506-7w

Sealand Estate
266w
Estate partnership scheme 266w

Second Chamber (Reform) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (31:03:93) 357-9

Secondary education
Educational standards 509w
Physical education 353w
Pupil-teacher ratios 551w
Selective schools 144

Secretarial staff
Agricultural Training Board 109w

Secure accommodation
720-1w

Secured loans
Rents to mortgages scheme 530w

Securities & Investments Board
Self-regulating organisations 749w

Security
Clyde Submarine Base 325w
Health visitors 612w

Security industry
Nuclear power stations 759w

Security Service
see MI5

Security Service Commissioner
Annual reports 203w

"Security Service Commissioner Annual Report, 1992"
203w

Sefton Park Palm House
Repairs & maintenance 135-6w

Selective schools
144-5, 149
Secondary education 144

Self help
Benzodiazepines 180-1w
Mental patients 180-1w

Self-employed
National insurance contributions 168w

Self-regulating organisations
Securities & Investments Board 749w

Sellafield
50w
Decommissioning 502w
Mixed oxide fuel 761-2w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 680w
Radioactive waste disposal 531w

Sentencing
Obscenity 700-2w

Sequestration of assets
Iraq 683w

Serbia
Sanctions 825-6, 945-6

Set-aside schemes
109-10w, (31:03:93) 414-69, 564w
Weedkillers 564w

Severe hardship provision
East Midlands 495
Scotland 488-9w
Young people 488-9w

Severn bridge
Road signs 558w

Sewage
Scotland 387w
Waste disposal 387w

Sex education
Contraceptives 351w

Sexual offences
Belfast Airport 640w
Community service orders 640w
Victim support schemes 222w

Shamrock Farms
Animal welfare 381-2w

Shared ownership schemes
Armed forces housing 175-6w, 326w

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 846
South East region (01:04:93) 601-8
Questions
Business, France 495-6w
Council housing, Repairs & maintenance 386w
Council tax, Strathclyde 335-6
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 483
One stop shop initiative 714-5w
Telecommunications technology, Licensing 204-5w

Shaw, Sir Giles
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 90-1

Sheehy Committee
see Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry

Sheep
Animal welfare (14:04:93) 854

Sheep dipping
Organophosphorous pesticides 328-30w

Sheep meat
EC action (29:03:93) 125

Sheep scab
Departmental leaflets 46w
Disease control 46w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
Coroners, Complaints 219w
Education & industry 156w
Immigration 722w
Mental health services 465-6w
Mental health services, Scotland 521w
Public appointments 154-5

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Questions
Corporation tax, Capital allowances 482

Sheltered housing
Mentally handicapped 411w

***Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian**, Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 737-8w
Employment opportunities, Coal mine closures 252w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
House of Commons catering, Access to parliament 463w
Regional selective assistance, Ross-on-Wye 406w

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (15:04:93) 967, 974, 983, 994-7

Shetland
Pollution monitoring 393w
Sea pollution 393w

Shipbuilding
Nuclear submarines 505w

Shipping
Oil pollution 53-4w

Shipping accidents
MV Havkong 149w

Shipping registration
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency 356w

Shops Act 1950
Questions
507

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 181, (15:04:93) 967
Questions
Business questions 951
Crossrail, Cost effectiveness 1w
Crossrail, Railway safety 1w
National debt 225-6w
Social security recipients, Energy prices 76w

Short, Ms Clare
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 826
Employment schemes, Travelling expenses 596-7w
Income support, Social security benefits rules 702w
Income support, Unemployment benefits 170w
Learning for work, 21 hour rule 418w
Learning for work, Social security benefits 337w
Local enterprise companies 313w
Restart programme 252-6w
Restart programme, Attendance 334-5w
"TEC Operating Agreement 1993" 108w
Travel to interview scheme, Subsistence allowances 682-3w
United Nations 577w

Shotgun certificates
Police records 751w

Sikhs
Crash helmets (01:04:93) 548-50

Simpson, Mr Alan
Questions
Severe hardship provision, East Midlands 495

Singapore
Foreign policy 575w

Single homeless
Community care 21-2w, 186w

Single sex schools
School population 157w

Sittings of the House Select Committee 463w

Sizewell B
160-1w, 703w
Nuclear safety 703w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 309
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 64-5, 97

Skillcentres
Kilburn 107-8w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Coastal Waters (Quality Standards) Bill, Points of order (15:04:93) 958
Competition (14:04:93) 845, 847, 848
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 163, 259-60, 263, (15:04:93) 966-7, 972, 980, 981, 988-91
Local government services (16:04:93) 1082
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 27, 37
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 518, 520
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 501
Business questions 508-9, 956
Chartermark scheme 14
Corporation tax 483
France, Foreign relations 813
Primary education, Educational assessment 146

Slaughterhouses
Fees & charges 248-50w
Inspections 248-50w

Sleeping rough
Greater London 530w
Wales 412w

Small businesses
Banks 747-8w
East Anglia 19w
Greater London 554w
Legislation 485-6
VAT 370w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 283-8
Questions
Animal welfare, Terrorism 431w
Bank of England 225w
Budget March 1993, Environment protection 486-7
UK trade with EC 749w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
Birds, Nature conservation 131w
Cabinet papers, Environment protection 464w
Coastal zone management, EC action 131w
Countryside stewardship scheme 518w
EC regional policy, Environment protection 497-8w
Energy Saving Trust 511w
Environmental policy, Dept of Trade & Industry 705-6w
Environmental policy, Dept of Transport 692-3w

Smith, Mr Chris—continued
Environmental policy, Ministerial duties 538w
Forest Enterprise 586w
Fuel cells, Finance 209w
Hazardous wastes, Exports 61w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 351w
Hedgerow incentive scheme 60w, 135w
National parks authorities 349w
Nature conservation, Coastal areas 131w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 492-3
Film industry 152-3
Serbia, Sanctions 945-6

Smith, Mr Llew
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 261
Questions
Amersham International, Radioactive waste disposal 681w
Ammunition, Defence contracts 324w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 739-40w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Costs 739w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Departmental records 716w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Contracts for services 569w
AWE Aldermaston, Hunting-Brae 501w
British Council, Wales 410w
"Case for University Colleges" 266w
Child abuse, Local government social services 260w
China, Nuclear non proliferation 687w
Citizen's Charter, Gypsies 534w
Coal mining, Government assistance 713w
Coal mining, Government grants 202w
Community care, Wales 411-2w
Community Selfbuild Agency 513w
Contaminated land registers, Local government expenditure 527w
Contaminated land registers, Wales 681w
Disability (Grants) Bill 1992/93 488w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 661w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 494w
Electricity supply industry 494w
Energy Advisory Panel 403w
Energy policy, Departmental publications 404w
Energy review, Magnox reactors 713w
Environment protection, India 347-8w
Environmental policy 44-5w
Export Intelligence Service, Pre Link 760w
Farmers, Suicide 250w
Fire prevention, Public sector housing 413w
Global positioning system 324w
Global technology partnership 679-80w
"Growing a Green Economy" 657w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 285w
Hazardous wastes, Radio programmes 277w
Incinerators, Germany 674w
Incinerators, Planning permission 413-4w
Industrial diseases benefits, Coal mining 659-60w
Industrial diseases benefits, Pneumoconiosis 659w
International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Nuclear weapons 740w
"Introduction to Council Tax Benefits" 703w
Israel, Human rights 580w
KONVER programme 713w
Local government reform, South Wales 9, 263-4w
Medical research, Myalgic encephalomyelitis 641w
Middle East, Nuclear weapons 740-1w
Military exercises, South Korea 324w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 669w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Medical research 460w
North Korea, Nuclear safeguards 484w, 583w
North Korea, Nuclear weapons deployment 122w

Smith, Mr Llew—continued
Norway, EC accession 581w
Nuclear Electric, Performance standards 493-4w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Magnox reactors 704w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 464-5w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, North Korea 82w, 685w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Nuclear non proliferation 581-2w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Russia 741w
Nuclear power 703-4w
Nuclear power, Consultants 703w
Nuclear power, Costs 704w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive waste disposal 717-8w
Nuclear safeguards, EC law 208w
Nuclear submarines, Persian Gulf 569w
Nuclear test ban 580w
Nuclear weapons tests, Expenditure 569w
Pakistan, Chieftain tanks 122w
Pakistan, Nuclear non proliferation 464w
Pakistan, Nuclear weapons 464w
PERIFRA programme 403w
Power stations, Energy conservation 713w
Prime Minister's questions 465w
Radiation protection, Wales 681w
Radioactive waste disposal 277w
Radioactive wastes, Water pollution 52-3w
ReChem International, Air pollution 137-8w
Social security benefits, Myalgic encephalomyelitis 664-5w
"Social Security Research Yearbook 1991/92" 661w
South Africa, Arms exports 687w
South Africa, Nuclear weapons 233w
Stoneleigh Food Fair, Government assistance 267w
Strategic defence initiative, Defence contracts 177w
Strategic defence initiative, USA 177w
Taxation, Invalidity benefits 480w
Trident submarines, Sonar 324w
Urban programme, Finance 411w
VAT, Electricity consumption 537w
Weapons, Iraq 508w
Welsh Centre for International Affairs 267w
Welsh Office, Departmental publications 541w
Wind power 208w
Young people, Training 735w

Smith, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
South East region (01:04:93) 596

Smoke alarms
Community care grants 304w
Scotland 320w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 834
Competition (14:04:93) 848
Questions
Business questions 952
Northern Ireland Child Support Agency 672w
Social Fund, Finance 671-2w

***Soames, Mr Nicholas**, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture*
Questions
Animal welfare, Markets 48-9w
Animals, Poisoning 564w
Badgers, Pest control 110w, 245w
Beef, Origin marking 566w
Birds, Import of live animals 749w
Comfrey, Health hazards 565w
Food additives, Minerals 47-8w
Mink, Farms 564w
Pate de foie gras 564w
Pesticides, Environment protection 328w
Sheep scab, Departmental leaflets 46w
Sheep scab, Disease control 46w

Soames, Mr Nicholas—continued
Veterinary drugs, Licensing 241-3w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate 241-4w

Social class
Armed forces officers 504w

Social Fund
Finance 671-2w
Judicial review 666w
Northern Ireland 671-2w
Stoke on Trent North 172w

Social science research
Research finance 215w

Social sciences education
General certificate of secondary education 154w

Social Security Act 1993
Questions
420-1w

Social security & taxation
Marginal tax rates 302w

Social security appeals
Disability living allowance 489w

Social security benefits
Community action 337w
Learning for work 337w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 664-5w
Prisoners' dependants 629-30w
Residential care 423-4w
Schizophrenia 666w
Temporary accommodation 659w

Social Security Benefits Agency
Performance standards 16, 300-1w

Social security benefits disqualification
Unemployment benefits 93-4w, 428-9w

Social security benefits rates
Housing benefits 667-8w
Income support 418w

Social security benefits rules
Income support 702w
Maintenance 658-9w
Residential allowance 492w
War pensions 740w

Social security benefits uprating
Retirement pensions 664w

Social security claims
Disability living allowance 490-1w
Housing benefits 76w
Mobility allowance 418-9w
Mucous membrane disease 422w

Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 356

Social security payments
737w
Retirement pensions 77-8w, 153
Theft 299-300w

Social security recipients
Energy prices 76-7w, 666w
Industrial diseases benefits 659w
Means tested benefits 417-8w
Retirement pensions 661-4w

Social security reciprocal agreements
Retirement pensions 171w

"Social Security Research Yearbook 1991/92"
661w

Social services
Alcoholism 470w
Drug abuse 470w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Child Support Act 1991, Ethnic minorities 488w
Crime prevention, Greater London 941

Soley, Mr Clive—continued
Employment policy 45w
Maintenance, Social security benefits rules 658-9w
Temporary accommodation, Social security benefits 659w

Solihull
Unitary development plans 347w

Somalia
Immigration applications 484-5w
Political refugees 583-4w, 621-2w

Somerset
Educational assessment 151

Sonar
Trident submarines 324w

Source Wales
85w

South Africa
Arms exports 687w
EC external relations 822
Elections 575w
Foreign relations 811-2
Nuclear weapons 45w, 233w
Nuclear weapons tests 45w
Politics & government 575w
Rugby 124-5w
UK companies abroad 209-10w

South East region
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 584-625
Development plans 130w
NHS finance 37-40w
Railway travel 558w
Regional planning & development 132w

South Korea
Foreign relations 822-3
Human rights 484w
Military exercises 324w
Ministers' visits abroad 484w, 687w
US bases 484w

South Wales
Assisted areas 3
Civil service dispersal 268w
Local government reform 9-10, 263-4w
Unemployment 3, 408w

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
239-40w, 600w

Southwark
Road works 437w

Sovereignty
Falkland Islands 381w

Spain
Ferries (02:04:93) 773-80

***Speaker and deputies**, For rulings & statements see separate heading*
Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Calling of Members (01:04:93) 612, 615
Calls to order (16:04:93) 1021
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill (02:04:93) 802
Closure of debate (02:04:93) 787, 794
Disallowed questions (29:03:93) 2, (14:04:93) 811-2, 822
Forms of address (01:04:93) 564
Members' conduct (29:03:93) 10, 14, 37, 40, 107, (30:03:93) 153, (31:03:93) 344
Members' interventions (29:03:93) 31, 114, (31:03:93) 394, 399, 472, (01:04:93) 685, (02:04:93) 797, (15:04:93) 1009
Members' speeches (29:03:93) 36, (31:03:93) 376
Members' speeches, Quotations (29:03:93) 37, (30:03:93) 155
Ministerial statements (01:04:93) 517, (14:04:93) 841
Oral questions (14:04:93) 822
Orders & regulations motions (31:03:93) 355-6, 409, 413

Speaker and deputies—continued
Points of order (29:03:93) 10, 21-3, 34-8, 55, 60-2, 86, 109, 112, (31:03:93) 353-5, 360, 369, (01:04:93) 524, 605, (14:04:93) 852, (15:04:93) 958
Private notice questions (01:04:93) 499, 505, 508-9
Royal Assent (29:03:93) 128
Rulings etc in response to points of order. (30:03:93) 157
Scope of debate (14:04:93) 909-10
Ten minutes rule (29:03:93) 61, 87

Speaker's rulings & statements
Ten minutes rule (29:03:93) 25
Unparliamentary expressions (29:03:93) 33, 34
Written questions (29:03:93) 66

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 161, 162-3, 169, 174, 180, 188, 198, 203-4, 205, 207, 217-8, 233-4, 243, 296, 301-2, (15:04:93) 963, 983, 984-7
London Ambulance Service (01:04:93) 669-85
Questions
Economic & monetary union 145w
Electricity Act 1989 717w
Electricity supply industry, Consumer protection 496-7w, 717w
Treaty on European Union, Denmark 123-4w, 817-8

Special education
156-7w
Down's syndrome 87w
Educational assessment 151
Teacher training 552w

Special health authorities
Expenditure 603-4w

Special hospitals
Noise 363w
Patients' rights 363w

Special protection areas
59w

Speed, Sir Keith
Questions
Aer Lingus, Government assistance 438-9w
Air France, Government assistance 439w
Airlines, Government assistance 439w

Spellar, Mr John
Questions
Corporal punishment, Schools 154w
Ministry of Defence, Civil service recruitment 177w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 34
Questions
Business questions 505-6
Sheep dipping, Organophosphorous pesticides 328-30w

Spicer, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 317, 322, (15:04:93) 973

Spink, Dr Robert
Questions
Primary education, Educational assessment 146

Sports Aid Foundation
Government grants 233w

Sports competitors
Work permits 384w

Sports Council for Northern Ireland
633-4w

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Deviance & behaviour disorders (02:04:93) 753-6

Sproat, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
Animal Aunts (01:04:93) 728-31, 734

Squatting
Housing estates 630-1w
Law reform 217w, 619-20w
Northern Ireland 630-1w

"Squatting Cozaultation Paper"
619w

Squire, Mr Robin, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1032-3, 1035
Questions
Bolton Borough Council, Contracts for services 350w
City action teams, Expenditure 512w
City challenge 512-4w
Clarence Dock, Land acquisition 509-10w
Contracts for services, Employment protection 54-5w
Council tax, Debt collection 514w
Council tax, Handicapped 58w
Council tax, Lambeth 53w
Council tax, Residential care 288-9w
Council tax, Transitional relief 131w
Council tax, Valuation 346w
County Hall, Property transfer 730w
Local authorities, Complaints 348w
Local government borrowing 130w, 293w
Local government finance, Hydrocarbon oil duties 516w
Local government services, Contracts for services 55-6w
Local government staff, Freemasonry 514w
Local income tax 350w
London Residuary Body 729-30w
London Residuary Body, Operating costs 730w
Markets 283-5w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 349w
Sefton Park Palm House, Repairs & maintenance 135-6w
Standard spending assessments, Census of population 132-3w
Standard spending assessments, Local education authorities 509w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 133-5w
Urban Regeneration Agency, Public appointments 347w

Squirrels
Nature conservation 54w

Sri Lanka
Diplomatic service 685w

Staffordshire Ambulance Service
Energy costs 469w

Staff-student ratios
Further education 352w
Higher education 352w

Stamp duties
368w

Standard assessment tasks
105w, 110w, 157w

Standard spending assessments
731w
Census of population 132-3w
Educational finance 548-52w
Local education authorities 509w

Standards specifications
Environment protection 498w

Standing charges
715w

Standing Order No 143
(30:03:93) 247-9

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Questions
Health services, Fees & charges 468w
Private investment, Dept for Education 351w

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John—continued
Private investment, Dept of Health 365-6w
Private investment, Dept of National Heritage 483w
Private investment, Dept of Social Security 421w
Private investment, Dept of the Environment 519w
Private investment, Dept of Transport 355w
Private investment, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 379-80w
Private investment, Home Office 382w
Private investment, Lord Chancellor's Dept 343w
Private investment, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 326w
Private investment, Ministry of Defence 322w
Private investment, Northern Ireland Office 402w, 404w
Private investment, Office of Public Service & Science 331w
Private investment, Scottish Office 387-8w
Private investment, Treasury 374w
Private investment, Welsh Office 414w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Questions
Alcohol advertising, Health warnings 364w
Craft industries, Government assistance 385w
Dentistry, Hospitals 153w
European Year of the Elderly 743w
Health service staff, Pay settlements 320w
Kenya, Foreign relations 579w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 430w
Scottish Grand Committee 339-40
Structure plans, Borders region 306w
UNESCO 82w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 848
Questions
British Technology Group, Privatisation 714w
Fines 943-4
Food hygiene, EC countries 182w
Industrial health & safety, Prosecutions 339-40w
Structure plans, Devon 531-2w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
Grant maintained schools 147
Legal aid scheme, Income support 526w
Legal aid scheme, Legal costs 525-6w
Overseas students, Student numbers 65w
Pupil exclusions 547w
Restart programme 105-6w
Science & technology research, EC grants & loans 535w
Special education, Teacher training 552w
Staff-student ratios, Further education 352w
Truancy 551w
Unemployment, Graduates 106w

Stephen, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 910-3
Intelligence services (29:03:93) 133
Questions
Bail 688w
Corporation tax, Tax rates & bands 481
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 343w

Sterling
Exchange rate mechanism 369w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Airlines, Licensing 297-9w
Ferries, Licensing 298w

Stevenson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 439-43, 462
Documents, Point of order (29:03:93) 23
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 270, (15:04:93) 992-4
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 503
National insurance contributions 485

Stewart, Mr Allan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Acute beds, Hospital admissions 311-2w
Agency nurses, Professional qualifications 585w
Ambulance services, Angus 310-1w
Ambulance services, Paramedical staff 309-10w
Ambulance services, Tayside 310w
Bone marrow disorders, Transplant surgery 585w
Community care, Chronically sick 305-6w
Community charge, Administrative costs 336-7
Contracts for services, Employment protection 592w
Council tax, Strathclyde 335-6
Council tax, Timesharing 151w
Day care of children, Scotland 588w
Dental services, Scotland 699w
Enterprise zones, Inverclyde 308-9w
European Commission, Civil servants' secondment 586w
European Year of the Elderly 307w
Fertility, Medical treatments 745-6w
Foreign investment in UK, Hong Kong 524w
Hospital ancillary staff, Manpower 309w
Hospital closures, Scotland 700w
Hospitals, Charitable donations 311w
Huntington's chorea, Lothian Health Board 700w
Industrial production, Scotland 344, 350
Industrial training schemes, Lanarkshire 342-4
Local enterprise companies 313w
Local government reform, Employment protection 584w
Local government reform, Scotland 307w, 584-5w
Local government staff, Manpower 309w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 350
Maternity services, Scotland 341
Mental health services, Hospital beds 312w
Mental health services, Scotland 521w
Midwives, Community health services 149w
Midwives, Professional qualifications 318w
North Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust 305w
North Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust, Hospital ancillary staff 305w
Scottish Enterprise, Offices 393w
Scottish health boards 309w
Stracathcro Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 151w
Stracathro Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 148w, 150w
Structure plans, Borders region 306w
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, Health service staff 588w
Unemployment, Dover 336
Victoria Infirmary Glasgow 341
Youth unemployment, Scotland 592w

Stock Exchange
Computer privacy 218w

Stoke Newington
Police stations 719w

Stoke on Trent North
Social Fund 172w

Stoneleigh Food Fair
Government assistance 267w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Belfast Airport, Air traffic 639w
Belfast Airport, Airport security 639w
Belfast Airport, EC grants & loans 639w
Belfast Airport, Manpower 639-40w
Belfast Airport, Privatisation 639w
Electricity tariffs, Northern Ireland 274-5w
VAT, Energy prices 639w

Stracathcro Hospital
Accident & emergency departments 151w

Stracathro Hospital
Accident & emergency departments 148w, 150w

Strang, Dr Gavin
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 422-30
Questions
Hill livestock allowances, Marginal land 449-50w, 457-8w, 521-2w
Livestock, Auctions 449w, 451-2w, 458w, 522w
Mental health services, Hospital beds 312w

Strategic defence initiative
Defence contracts 177w
USA 177w

Strathclyde
Council tax 335-6
Local government finance 346
Motor vehicle theft 309w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
Council tax, Valuation 20w
Standard spending assessments 731w

Streeter, Mr Gary
Questions
Independent Living Extension Fund 420w
Israel, Peace negotiations 815-6

Strikes
489
National Union of Rail Maritime & Transport Workers 944-5
Railway transport 492

Structure plans
Borders region 306w
Devon 531-2w

Student grants
Handicapped students 64w
Legal profession (01:04:93) 532-5
Northern Ireland 638w

Student numbers
Medical education 548w
Northern Ireland 734w
Overseas students 65w

Students
Housing benefits 642w
Northern Ireland 642w
Suicide 353w

Sub post offices
Closures 208w

Subsistence allowances
Travel to interview scheme 682-3w

Sudan
Armed forces deployment 741w
Human rights 577w

Suffolk
Job centres 92-3w

Sugar
EC action (14:04:93) 922

Suicide
Farmers 250w
Paracetamol 237-8w
Students 353w

Sunday trading
722w

Supplementary credit approvals
Recycling 285-8w

Surgery
Heart diseases 181w, 409w
Orthopaedics 31w, 743w

Sutton
Chemists shops 599-600w

Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
154

Swansea
Civil service manpower 267w
Land acquisition 415-6w

Sweden
Retirement age 663w

Sweeney, Mr Walter
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 200, 202-9, 210
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 517
Questions
Foreign companies in UK, Wales 2
Hospital patients, Wales 84w
Hospital waiting lists, Wales 140w
Local government constituencies, Vale of Glamorgan 9

Sykes, Mr John
Debates etc.
Local government services (16:04:93) 1023, 1037-40
Questions
Railway transport, Strikes 492

TACIS Programme
705w

Tai Cymru
see Housing for Wales

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Questions
Official engagements 129w, 377w, 688w

Tax administration
VAT 19w

Tax allowances
Inheritance tax 226-7w
Lloyd's of London 229w

Tax avoidance
Capital gains tax 18-9w

Tax burden
Corporation tax 482
Unemployed 369w
VAT 487-8

Tax collection
Council tax 678w
Unpaid taxes 747w

Tax harmonisation
Alcoholic drinks duties 370w

Tax rates & bands
Corporation tax 481-2
Income tax 483-4

Tax reform
Petroleum exploration 746-8w
Petroleum revenue tax 19w, 495-6, 746-8w

Tax yields
Banks 142-3w
Income tax 234w
National insurance contributions 169w
VAT 141-2w, 368w

Taxation
Invalidity benefits 480w

Taxpayers
473-7w
Personal records 748w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
English education, Educational assessment 215w
Further education, Departmental leaflets 541-2w

Taylor, Mrs Ann—continued
Pre-school education 140-1
Selective schools 145
Teachers, Pay 542-4w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 183, 255-6

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 448
Questions
Exchange rate mechanism, Sterling 369w
Lobsters, Fishing catches 274w

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 382, 401-5
Questions
Bail 688w
Bradford County Court, Care proceedings 426w
Commercial Court, Judges 196-7w
Courts, Information 525w
Crown courts, Criminal proceedings 425-6w
Evidence, Child abuse 526-7w
Guinness, Legal aid 6w
Judges 344w
Judges, Age 343w
Juries, Teachers 105w
Land acquisition, Mortgages 526w
Land ownership & tenure, Trusts 344w
Land registration 197-8w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 195-6w, 343w
Legal aid scheme 5-6w
Legal aid scheme, Contracts for services 199-200w
Legal aid scheme, Income support 526w
Legal aid scheme, Legal costs 525-6w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Contracts for services 198-200w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Private investment 343w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Public appointments 526w
Magistrates, Resignations 426w
Recorders, Ethnic minorities 343w
Recorders, Women 343w
Religion, Northern Ireland Court Service 427w
Winch, Mary 200w

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 163-4, 177, 242, 258, 261-2, 264-5, 268, 273, 287, 296, 316-8, (15:04:93) 962, 975, 977-80
Questions
European Communities 576w
Treaty on European Union, Denmark 817

Taylor Inquiry
see Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry

Tayside
Ambulance services 310w

Teacher training
Special education 552w

Teachers
Juries 105w, 110w
Local education authorities 545-7w
Mathematics education 142-3
Pay 153w, 352-3w, 542-4w

Teaching methods
Educational standards 64w

"TEC Operating Agreement 1993"
108w

Technical education
149-50

Telecommunications industry
Balance of payments 762w

Telecommunications technology
Health physics 670w
Licensing 204-5w

Telephone systems
Elgin 349

Telephones
Nuisance 349

Television viewers
S4C 482w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Questions
Travelling people, Caravan sites 527w

Temporary accommodation
Cookers 58w
Homelessness 132w
Housing associations 273-4w
Social security benefits 659w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (29:03:93) 25

Tenants' choice
282w

Tenants' incentive scheme
674w

Terrorism
Animal welfare 431w
Arrests 732w
Bombings 750w
Death 635-6w
Iran 486w, 575w
Northern Ireland 396w, 401-2w, 635-6w, 732w
Republic of Ireland 496, 538-9w

Testbourne School
Grant maintained schools 351w

Textile industry
Environment protection 498w

Thatcher, RtHonBaroness
956

Theft
Social security payments 299-300w

Thomason, Mr Roy
Questions
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 291-2w
Pension Law Review Committee 170-1w
Young offenders, Parental responsibility 722w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 92-5

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Commonwealth of Independent States 579w
Crime prevention 719w
Mathematics education, Teachers 142-3
Pay 489

Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Questions
Pre-school education 140

THORP
50w, 680w
Investment returns 50w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Questions
Intercountry adoption, Romania 363-4w
Ministers' domestic visits, Bolton 90w
Young offenders 719-20w, 939

Timesharing
955
Council tax 151w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 98-9
Questions
Assisted areas 496w

Tipping, Mr Paddy*—*continued
Business questions 955
Energy policy, Ministers' visits abroad 405w

Tipping of waste
133w
Gases 276w

Tornado aircraft
571w

Torry research station
248w

Touche Ross
17w, 48w, 50w, 78-81w, 92w, 114-8w, 176w, 178w, 193w, 346-7w, 416w, 706-12w

Tour operators
Air travel organisers licence 562-4w

Tourism
Farm incomes 48w
Northern Ireland 635w
Wales 460w

Tourists
Wales 461w

Tower Hamlets
560-1w

Town & country planning
Cambridgeshire (16:04:93) 1083-90

Townend, Mr John
Questions
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 484
Mental health community care, Wales 412w
Mental health services 466w
Mental health services, Croydon Health Authority 466w
Mentally handicapped, Sheltered housing 411w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 814
Metropolitan Police 719w, 941-2
UNESCO 156

Tracey, Mr Richard
Questions
Business questions 505, 952
Chessington Computer Centre, Civil service agencies 331-2w
London Ambulance Service 239-40w

Trade & Industry Select Committee
(29:03:93) 25-125

Trade Descriptions Act 1968
Questions
212-4w

Trade missions
Welsh Development Agency 459w

Trade promotion
Diplomatic service 123w

Trade union membership
Industrial tribunals 736w

Trade union recognition
Prison Service Union 117w

Trading standards departments
552w, 760w
Consumer protection 206w

Traffic Commissioners
Road traffic control 691w

Traffic noise
Greater London 442w

Trafford
Hospitals (01:04:93) 529-32

Training
Disabled workers 105w
Young people 735w

Training & enterprise councils
108w, 139w, 252w, 427-8w
Expenditure 427w
Local Education Business Partnerships 428w
Wales 139-40w

Training credits
313w

Transfer & automated registration of uncertificated stock
218w

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981
Questions
54-5w, 525w, 584w, 592w, 620w, 725-6w
Health service staff 588w

Transitional arrangements
Community care 365-7w

Transitional relief
Council tax 87w, 131w

Transplant surgery
Bone marrow disorders 585w

Transplantation of Human Organs Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (30:03:93) 158-9

Transport
739w

Transport Act 1985
Questions
691w

Transport infrastructure
Private investment 5w

Transport of animals
326w

Transport of radioactive materials
Military vehicles 558w
Nuclear weapons 322-3w, 382w
Plutonium 440w, 716w

Transport police
694-5w

Transport policy
692w
Development plans 560w
Greater London 694w

Travel
Journalists 570w

Travel cards
441-2w, 556w
Greater London 442w
Railway fares 696w

Travel to interview scheme
Subsistence allowances 682-3w
Travelling expenses 682-3w

Travelling expenses
Employment schemes 596-7w
Ministers' visits abroad 304w
Travel to interview scheme 682-3w

Travelling people
(01:04:93) 535-40
Caravan sites 527w
Trespass 289-90w

Trawsfynydd power station
759w

Treasury
Computer privacy 684w
Contracts for services 225w
Disabled workers 370-1w
Ethnic minorities 370-1w
Ethnic monitoring 371-2w
Government contracts 17w
Higher civil servants 372w
Investment income 478w
Management consultants 17w

Treasury—continued
Private investment 374w
Public appointments 535w
Women 371-2w

Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee
(29:03:93) 128

Treasury grant
National Insurance Fund 420-1w

Treasury Solicitors Dept
16-7w

Treaty on European Union
1-2, (30:03:93) 160-327, 478w, 504-5, 574w, 813-4, (15:04:93) 959-1001
Credit 478w
Denmark 123-4w, 817-8
Public sector borrowing requirement 479w, 749w
Referenda 156

Treaty on Open Skies (Privileges & Immunities) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(31:03:93) 355

Tredinnick, Mr David
Questions
Alternative medicine, Family doctors 31w
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 502
Business questions 509
Preventive medicine, Family doctors 29-30w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 291w

Treshman, Don
Immigration controls 750-1w

Trespass
Travelling people 289-90w

Trident submarines
Sonar 324w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 899-904
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 500
Dyslexia 141-2
European Parliament constituencies 936
Public bodies, Accountability 307w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 298w
Helicopter carriers 154
Helicopter carriers, Defence procurement 16w

Truancy
551w

Trust ports
Northern Ireland 641w
Privatisation 641w

Trusts
Land ownership & tenure 344w

Tuition fees
Higher education 216-7w, 436w

Turkmenistan
Nuclear weapons 464w

21 hour rule
702w
Community action 418w
Learning for work 418w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Central Science Laboratory, Performance standards 247w

Twitchell, Keith
Appeals 217w

Twitchell, Keith—continued
Convictions 217w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 432-6
Questions
Convictions, Cornwall 117w
Integrated administration & control system 454w
Physical education, Cornwall 157w

Tyres
Waste disposal 498-9w, 510w

UK companies abroad
British Nuclear Fuels 705w
South Africa 209-10w

UK contributions
Common agricultural policy 567w
European cooperative longterm initiative in defence 322w
UNESCO 81-2w

UK delegations
380w
Economic & Social Committee 124w

UK trade with EC
749w

Ulster Museum
Attendance 402w

Ulsterbus
631w
Religion 401w

UN
see United Nations

UN Conference on Environment & Development
588w

UN Educational Scientific & Cultural Organisation
see UNESCO

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
118w

UN Security Council
577w, (02:04:93) 735-43

UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia
83w

Unemployed
Tax burden 369w

Unemployment
Belfast 637w
Dover 336
Economic growth 368-9w
Gloucestershire 251-2w
Graduates 106w
Gwynedd 1-2
Liverpool 337-8w
Llanfair Caereinion 593w
Newport Gwent 10
Northern Ireland 637w
South Wales 3, 408w
Wales 2-3

Unemployment benefits
Income support 170w
Industrial tribunals 336-7w
Social security benefits disqualification 93-4w, 428-9w

UNESCO
82w, 156
UK contributions 81-2w

Unfair dismissal
107w

Uniform business rate
Wales 89w

Union Railways
(02:04:93) 795-802

UNITA
576w

Unitary development plans
Greater London 130w
Solihull 347w

United Arab Emirates
Armed forces deployment 15w
Armed forces training 15w
Arms trade 161w
Corporal punishment 233w
Diplomatic service 83w
Overseas trade 161w
Police 104w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Privatisation 405w

United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service
Directors 111w
Employment protection 111w

United Nations
576-7w, 583w, (02:04:93) 735-43, 825-6, (14:04:93) 829-41

Universities
Handicapped students 63-4w

University Air Squadron
507w

University finance
Northern Ireland 656-8w
Scotland 344-5

University of Ulster
Manpower 402w

Unpaid taxes
Tax collection 747w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (29:03:93) 33, 34

Upholder class submarines
Defence procurement 720w

Upper Waiting Hall
Exhibitions 463w

Uranium
Ammunition 193w

Urban areas
513w
Air pollution 532w

Urban Crime Fund
Police 935-6

Urban Partnership Fund
133-5w, (16:04:93) 1011-82

Urban programme
Finance 411w
Government grants to local authorities 133-5w
Wales 411w

Urban Regeneration Agency
Public appointments 347w

US bases
South Korea 484w

USA
Diplomatic service 485w
GATT 821-2
Military aircraft 195w
Northern Ireland 686w
Retirement age 663w
Strategic defence initiative 177w

Vaccination
188-92w
Hepatitis 32w
Meningitis 362-3w

Vale of Glamorgan
Local government constituencies 8-9

Valleys initiative
85w
Ministerial statements (01:04:93) 511-23

Valuation
Council tax 20w, 346w

Vandalism
School buildings 412w
Wales 412w

Varroasis
88w

VAT
142w, 368w, 488
Budget March 1993 370w
Charities 488-9
Domestic energy consumption 367w
EC internal trade 367w
Electricity consumption 537w
Energy prices 76w, 211w, 395w, 421w, 665w, 702-3w, 749w
Footwear 31w
Fuels 142w, 187w, 367w, 479-81, 487-91
Northern Ireland 395w
Small businesses 370w
Tax administration 19w
Tax burden 487-8
Tax yields 141-2w, 368w

VAT registration
228-30w
Company liquidations 142w

VAT zero rating
477w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Dovelands School Leicester (15:04:93) 1004-5, 1008, 1009
Questions
Barlow Clowes, Bank of Credit & Commerce International 145w
Equatorial Bank, Closures 145w
Regional planning & development, South East region 132w
Urban Regeneration Agency, Public appointments 347w

Vehicle Inspectorate
558w
Privatisation 560w

Verne Prison
Prison population 725w
Prison staff 725w

Veterinary drugs
Licensing 241-3w

Veterinary Medicines Directorate
241-4w
Performance standards 244w

Veterinary Products Committee
328-30w

Veterinary services
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 725w

Victim Support
see National Council of Victim Support

Victim support schemes
Sexual offences 222w

Victoria Infirmary Glasgow
341

Video recordings
Admissibility of evidence 382w, 623w
Crown courts 526-7w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Questions
Armed forces strength, Gosport 505w
Dogs, Injuries 219w
Paracetamol, Suicide 237-8w

Village schools
Borders region 347
Expenditure 348
Wales 6

Violence on television
Consolidated Fund debates (01:04:93) 564-83

Vocational training
EC grants & loans 735w
Equal opportunities 594w

Voluntary projects programme
Wales 265w

Voluntary work
(02:04:93) 788-94

Vote bundle
Costs 147w

Voting behaviour
EC Environment Council 532w
EC Finance Council 19-20w
EC Transport Council 2w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Questions
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Ethnic minorities 533w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Ethnic monitoring 533w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Higher civil servants 533-4w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Ministerial duties 90w
Charterline 15-6
Chartermark scheme 13-4
Chessington Computer Centre, Civil service agencies 331-2w
Citizen's Charter 90w
Citizen's Charter, Gypsies 534w
Contracts for services, Government departments 215w
Government departments, Contracts for services 91w
Industrial research, Research finance 13
Ministerial policy advisors, Disclosure of information 330-1w
Ministers' domestic visits, Bolton 90w
Next steps initiative 332-4w
Open government 90w
Private investment, Office of Public Service & Science 331w
Science & technology policy 90-1w
Science & technology research, EC grants & loans 535w
Science budget 12-3

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc.
Common agricultural policy (31:03:93) 453-4

Wales
Arson 412w
Assisted areas 88w
British Council 410w
Child protection committees 260w
Class sizes 267w, 408w
Coal mine closures 139w
Coal mining 84w
Community care 411-2w
Community councils 138w
Computer privacy 462w
Contaminated land registers 681w
Cost per pupil 6
Council tax 87w, 462-4w
Council tenants 682w
Dental services 265w
Dentists 264-6w
Devolution 5
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 264w
District health authorities 409w
Down's syndrome 87w, 261-2w
EC grants & loans 84-5w, 87w, 137w
Economic situation 84w
Educational assessment 268w
Educational finance 6
Elderly 460w
Family doctors 411w, 681-2w
Farmers 250w, 269w
Fire prevention 413w
Foreign companies in UK 2
Foreign investment in UK 1-2, 11-2, 85w
Geriatrics 410w
GP fundholders 6-7

Wales—continued
Grant maintained schools 88w
Handicapped 86w
Hazardous wastes 413-4w
Heart diseases 409w
Hill farming 268w
Hill livestock allowances 410-1w, 457-8w
Hospital patients 84w
Hospital waiting lists 140w
House condition survey 415w
Housing & handicapped 86-8w
Languages education 266w
Livestock 458w
Local government reform 5, 85-6w
Mental health community care 412w
Mentally handicapped 261w
Mink 541w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 460w
NHS administration 455-8w
NHS trusts 6-7, 139w
Non-departmental public bodies 267w
Nurses 410w
Old people's homes 459w
Police 7-8, 95w, 218-9w, 722w
Police civilians 95w
Preventive medicine 416w
Psychogeriatrics 457-60w
Public appointments 89w
Pupil-teacher ratios 413w
Radiation protection 681w
Radon gas 90w
Redundancy 84w
Refuges 266w
Rented housing 745w
Residential care 411w, 459-60w
Respite care 459w
Schools 414-6w
Sleeping rough 412w
Tourism 460w
Tourists 461w
Training & enterprise councils 139-40w
Unemployment 2-3
Uniform business rate 89w
Urban programme 411w
Vandalism 412w
Village schools 6
Voluntary projects programme 265w
Water supply disconnections 407-8w, 457w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 210, 215, 219-20, 224, 265-6, 270, 274, 277, 280, 283, 312-20
Questions
Legislation, Scotland 340
Local government reform, Scotland 345

Wallace, Mr James
Questions
Birds, Import of live animals 749w
Empty housing, Council housing 150w
Falkland Islands, Defence expenditure 685w
Falkland Islands, Petroleum exploration 380-1w
MV Braer Inquiry 738-9w
Official engagements 762w

Wallenberg, Raoul
(01:04:93) 553-5

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 370

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 37
Questions
Dock workers 295-7w
Dock workers, Casual workers 294-6w
Oil pollution, Shipping 53-4w
Social Fund, Stoke on Trent North 172w
Transport policy 692w
Transport policy, Development plans 560w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Privatisation 560w

Waltham Forest
In vitro fertilisation 236w

Walton Centre for Neurology & Neurosurgery NHS Trust
(31:03:93) 471-8

Wandsworth Prison
Prison visits 724-5w

War crimes
Yugoslavia 494, (01:04:93) 543-8

War pensions
Deaf 740w
Social security benefits rules 740w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Armed forces officers, Social class 504w
District health authorities, Management consultants 409w
GP fundholders, Wales 7
Hazardous materials, Imports 511w
Heart diseases, Surgery 409w
Llanelli Sand Dredging, Licensing 409w
M4, Road signs 409w
Nurses, Career structure 410w
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 558w
Severn bridge, Road signs 558w
Sudan, Armed forces deployment 741w

Wardle, Mr Charles, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Intelligence services (29:03:93) 134-8
Questions
Animal cruelty, Law reform 751w
Animal experiments, Genetic engineering 103-4w
Animal welfare, Terrorism 431w
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, Veterinary services 725w
Beauty therapy, Licensing 680w
Body searches 113-4w, 624w
British citizenship 96w
British citizenship, Hong Kong 104w
Coroners, Complaints 219w
Crime, Greater London 940-1
Crime, Police authorities 756-60w
Crime prevention, Greater London 941
Dogs, Injuries 219w
Farriers 499-500w
Forensic science, Criminal investigation 429w
Gloucestershire Constabulary, Manpower 222-3w
Home Office, Management consultants 114-8w
Immigration 722w
Immigration & Nationality Division, Complaints 224w
Immigration applications 101-2w
Immigration applications, Marriage 382w
Immigration applications, Yugoslavia 112w
Immigration controls, Abortion 624-5w
Immigration controls, Disclosure of information 626w
Immigration officers, Contracts for services 726w
Immigration rules, Asian immigrants 112w
Metropolitan Police, Falkland Islands 104w
Metropolitan Police, Horses 725w
Offensive weapons 719w
Offensive weapons, Greater Manchester 113w
Police, Finance 719w
Police, Greenwich 935
Police, United Arab Emirates 104w
Police, Urban Crime Fund 935-6
Police, Wales 95w, 218-9w, 722w
Police, Wiltshire 722w
Police authorities, Budgeting 934-5
Police authorities, Management 934-5
Police authorities, Public appointments 721w
Police national computer, Contracts for services 430-1w, 621-2w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 430w
Police Staff College, Contracts for services 619-20w

Wardle, Mr Charles—continued
Police stations, Stoke Newington 719w
Police training, Racial attacks 110-1w
Police vehicles 383w
Political refugees, Greater London 752w
Political refugees, Somalia 621-2w
Shamrock Farms, Animal welfare 381-2w
Shotgun certificates, Police records 751w
Treshman, Don, Immigration controls 750-1w
United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service, Directors 111w
United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service, Employment protection 111w
Work permits, Sports competitors 384w

Warehouse parties
223-4w, (01:04:93) 535-40
High Peak 494-5

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 837
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 508w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 540w

Warren Spring Laboratory
715w

Warrington
Disability living allowance 76w

Waste disposal
Brackletter 149w
Sewage 387w
Tyres 498-9w, 510w

Waste management
413-4w
Expenditure 276w

Wasting police time
Northern Ireland 395w
Prosecutions 395w

Water & sewerage companies
Fences 673w

Water charges
Rural areas 306w
Scotland 306w

Water meters
519-20w, 675-6w

Water pollution
Coastal areas (14:04:93) 853-6, (15:04:93) 958
EC law 522-4w
Norfolk 59w
Radioactive wastes 52-3w
Scotland 522-4w

Water supply
Disclosure of information 676-7w

Water supply disconnections
953
Hepatitis 457w
Wales 407-8w, 457w

Water supply industry
Privatisation 346
Scotland 309w

Water transport
River Thames 559-60w

Waterloo Station
440w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Questions
Prosecutions 200-1w
Social sciences education, General certificate of secondary education 154w

Watson, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 395
Questions
Israel, Peace negotiations 815

Watson, Mr Mike—continued
Legal aid scheme, Scotland 337

Weapons
Iraq 508w

Weedkillers
Set-aside schemes 564w

Weights & Measures Act 1985
Questions
50w

Welfare of Animals at Markets Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (14:04:93) 854

Wellingborough
Council tax 493

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 264-5, 268, 276-7

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Questions
Ambulance services, Angus 310-1w
Ambulance services, Tayside 310w
Hospitals, Charitable donations 311w
Midwives, Community health services 149w
Midwives, Professional qualifications 318w
Non-departmental public bodies, Public appointments 389-90w
Stracathcro Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 151w
Stracathro Hospital, Accident & emergency departments 148w, 150w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 346

Welsh Assembly
5

Welsh Centre for International Affairs
267w

Welsh Consumer Council
411w

Welsh Development Agency
(01:04:93) 511-23
Capital investment 259-60w
Environment protection 136w
Factories 259w
Finance 3-4, 259-60w
Land reclamation 259w
Public appointments 136-7w
Trade missions 459w

Welsh Grand Committee
5-6

Welsh language
Children 454-6w
Languages education 265w

Welsh National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting
415w

Welsh Office
7, 267-8w
Departmental publications 541w
Ethnic monitoring 262w
Higher civil servants 262-3w
Private investment 414w
Public appointments 414w
Women 262w

Welsh Water
407-8w

Welsh Women's Aid
266w

WENA Hotels
Egypt 540w

Wessex Regional Health Authority
Audit 184-6w
Computers in National Health Service 608w
Death rate 471-2w
Departmental correspondence 608w

West Cumbria
Road works 168w

West Glamorgan County Council
415-6w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Publications 185w

West Wales
Industrial development 10-1

Western Sahara
Referenda 485w

Whales
Nature conservation (02:04:93) 803-10

Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice Bill (HL), 2R (14:04:93) 863, 878
Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations (31:03:93) 364
Voluntary work (02:04:93) 788-91, 793
Questions
Crime, Greater London 941
First aid 179w
Immigration & Nationality Division, Complaints 224w
Life imprisonment, Codes of practice 223w
Police discipline 111-2w
Priority routes, Greater London 2w
Prison Service Agency 385w
Social security payments, Theft 299-300w
Warehouse parties 223-4w

Whittingdale, Mr John
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 847

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Animal Aunts (01:04:93) 731-4
Retirement age (01:04:93) 689-92
Questions
Dept of Social Security, Computer privacy 665w
Dept of Social Security, Contracts for services 169w
Dept of Social Security, Management consultants 416w
Dept of Social Security, Private investment 421w
Dept of Social Security, Public appointments 661w
Disability (Grants) Bill 1992/93 488w
Health service staff, Bus services 171w
Housing benefits, Administrative costs 668w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 667-8w
Industrial injuries scheme, Emphysema 492-3w
National insurance benefits 74w
National insurance contributions 304-6w
National insurance contributions, Earnings limits 168-9w, 302w
National insurance contributions, Self-employed 168w
National insurance contributions, Tax yields 169w
National Insurance Fund, Treasury grant 420-1w
Occupational pensions, Personal pensions 169w
Parliamentary questions, Civil service agencies 170w
Pensioners, Personal income 662w
Pensions 77w, 169-70w
Retirement age 661-3w
Retirement age, Sweden 663w
Retirement pensions, Expenditure 664w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits uprating 664w
Retirement pensions, Social security payments 77-8w
Retirement pensions, Social security recipients 661-4w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann—continued
Retirement pensions, Social security reciprocal agreements 171w
Social security payments, Theft 299-300w

Wigan Borough Council
608w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
Capital gains tax, Tax avoidance 18-9w
Coal mining, Industrial health & safety 212w
Community care, Handicapped 86w
Companies political contributions, Public utilities 114w
Dental services, Wales 265w
Dentists, Manpower 264-6w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Local government expenditure 264w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Repetitive strain injury 75-6w
EC grants & loans, Wales 137w
Economic analysis, Economic forecasting 371w
Geriatrics, Hospital beds 410w
Handicapped students, Student grants 64w
Handicapped students, Universities 63-4w
Housing & handicapped, Wales 86-8w
Industry, EC grants & loans 87w
Land ownership & tenure, Trusts 344w
Land registration 197-8w
Medical examinations, Elderly 411w, 599w
Mentally handicapped, Wales 261w
NHS administration, Manpower 455-8w
Occupational pensions, Personal pensions 169w
Personal taxation, Foreigners 19w
Radiotherapy, North Wales 410w
Sheep scab, Departmental leaflets 46w
Sheep scab, Disease control 46w
Unemployment, Gwynedd 1-2
Voluntary projects programme, Wales 265w
Welsh Development Agency, Capital investment 259-60w
Welsh Development Agency, Factories 259w
Welsh Development Agency, Finance 259-60w
Welsh Development Agency, Land reclamation 259w
Welsh language, Children 454-6w
Welsh language, Languages education 265w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 175, (15:04:93) 968, 988, 991
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 499
Business questions 509-10
Education, EC grants & loans 158w
VAT, Fuels 480

Willetts, Mr David
Questions
Residential allowance, Social security benefits rules 492w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Competition (14:04:93) 847
Questions
Land acquisition, Swansea 415-6w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 519-20
Questions
Coal, Imports 50w
Common agricultural policy, UK contributions 567w
Employment protection, Contracts for services 54-5w, 91-2w
Environment protection, Expenditure 567w
Industrial research, Research finance 13
Unemployment, South Wales 3

Williams, Mr Alan W—continued
VAT, Tax yields 141-2w

Wilshire, Mr David
Questions
Civil servants, Freemasonry 15
Exhibitions, Upper Waiting Hall 463w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
British Rail, Points of order (30:03:93) 157
Questions
British Rail, Investment 555-6w
British Rail, Occupational pensions 359w
North Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust, Hospital ancillary staff 305w

Wiltshire
Police 722w

Wiltshire Constabulary
722w

Winch, Mary
200w

Wind power
208w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict (14:04:93) 839
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 165, 182, 192, 218, 237, 255, 294, 308, 320
Intelligence services (29:03:93) 131-4, 138
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 502
Budget March 1993 368w
Business questions 956
Council housing, Housing construction 531w
Domestic rents 678-9w
Intelligence services, Accountability 940
Iraq, Nuclear weapons 582w
Iraq, Petroleum 582w
Members' correspondence, Administrative delays 349w
Russia, Foreign policy 574w
South Africa, Foreign relations 811-2
United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service, Directors 111w
United Kingdom Immigrants' Advisory Service, Employment protection 111w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Dietary supplements, EC action 122w
Diplomatic service, Manufacturing industries 234w
Veterinary drugs, Licensing 241-3w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate 241-4w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Com (30:03:93) 249-50, 269, 273, 279-80, 285, (15:04:93) 969-70, 978-9, 984-5
"Prospects for Coal White Paper" (29:03:93) 38
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 500
Business questions 951
Industrial production, Scotland 350
Police vehicles 383w
Standards specifications, Environment protection 498w

Wolds Remand Prison
Codes of practice 614w
Per capita costs 113w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
M25 (01:04:93) 628-32, 638
Valleys initiative (01:04:93) 521
Questions
Armed conflict, Bosnia-Herzegovina 501-2

Women
Advertising codes of practice 204w
Attorney General 344w

Women*—*continued
Cabinet Office 129w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 533w
Dept for Education 216w
Dept of Employment 251w
Dept of National Heritage 119w
Dept of the Environment 277-8w
Dept of Trade & Industry 158-60w
Dept of Transport 294w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 358w
Environment protection 54w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 121w
Health service staff 236w
Home Office 220w
Lord Advocate 697w
Mathematics education 142
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 244-5w
Ministry of Defence 323-4w
Northern Ireland Office 394w
Prison sentences 151-2w
Privy Council 360w
Recorders 343w
Treasury 371-2w
Welsh Office 262w

Wood
Broadleaved woodlands 589w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 203w
Overseas trade 161w

Woodgrange Park Cemetery Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R order read (01:04:93) 479, (15:04:93) 931

Woodland grant scheme
589w

Woolf Inquiry
see Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry

Work permits
Cricket 338w
Indian subcontinent 338w
Sports competitors 384w

Working hours
Junior hospital doctors 671w

Workstart
East Anglia 93w
Employment schemes 93w

World Bank
579w

World Food Programme
118w

World Health Organisation
Schizophrenia 611w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Local government reform, Scotland 345

Wright, Dr Tony
Questions
Class sizes 155w
Local authorities, Complaints 348w
Non-departmental public bodies 202w
Prime Minister, Civil service manpower 377-8w

Wright, Dr Tony*—*continued
Public appointments 201-2w
Public appointments, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 534w
Public appointments, Dept for Education 551w
Public appointments, Dept of Employment 593w
Public appointments, Dept of Health 466-7w
Public appointments, Dept of National Heritage 481w
Public appointments, Dept of Social Security 661w
Public appointments, Dept of the Environment 729w
Public appointments, Dept of Trade & Industry 705w
Public appointments, Dept of Transport 560w
Public appointments, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 581w
Public appointments, Home Office 624w
Public appointments, Lord Chancellor's Dept 526w
Public appointments, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 566-7w
Public appointments, Ministry of Defence 506w
Public appointments, Northern Ireland Office 641w
Public appointments, Prime Minister 465w
Public appointments, Scottish Office 699w
Public appointments, Treasury 535w
Public appointments, Welsh Office 414w
Treaty on European Union, Referenda 156

Written questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (29:03:93) 66

Yellow card scheme
603w

Yeltsin, Boris
(02:04:93) 781-7

***Yeo, Mr Tim**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State; Dept of Health*
Questions
Child health 602w
Child patients 602w
Child safety 605w
Child safety, Expenditure 606w
Community care, Citizen's charter 191-2w
Community care, Codes of practice 612w
Community care, Elderly 468-9w
Community care, Local government social services 612-3w
Community care, Rehabilitation centres 612w
Community care, Single homeless 21-2w, 186w
Community care, Transitional arrangements 365-7w
Drug abuse, Residential care 471w
Drug abuse, Social services 470w
European Year of the Elderly 743w
Handicapped, Local government social services 608w
Health, Heating 187w
Health services, Elderly 467-8w
Hospices, Children 364w
Intercountry adoption, Romania 363-4w
Local government social services 613w
Local government social services, Racial harassment 183w

Yeo, Mr Tim*—*continued
Medical research, Housing & elderly 284w
Mental health review tribunals 238w
Mental health services 465-6w
Mental health services, Croydon Health Authority 466w
Mental patients 613w
Mental patients, Codes of practice 180w
Mental patients, Counselling 180w
Mental patients, Self help 180-1w
Mentally Disordered Offenders Services Review, Health services 466w
Mentally ill, Death 363w
Psychogeriatrics, Hospital beds 360-1w
Rehabilitation centres, Finance 611w
Schizophrenia, Medical research 670w
Schizophrenia, Mental patients 611w
Special hospitals, Patients' rights 363w

***Young, Sir George**, Minister for Housing and Planning*
Questions
Empty Government Residential Properties Task Force 675w
First time buyers 674w
Homelessness, Local government expenditure 529w
Housing associations as managing agents scheme 674-5w
Housing cooperatives, Management agreements 675w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 291-2w
London Forum, Costs 284w
London Forum, Finance 284w
Mortgages 528w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Secured loans 530w
"Rough Sleepers Initiative Consultation Paper" 530w
Sleeping rough, Greater London 530w

Young offenders
719-20w, 939
Habitual offenders 938-9
North West region 220-1w
Northern Ireland 632w
Parental responsibility 722w
Prison education services 724w

Young people
Contraceptives (01:04:93) 555-6
Severe hardship provision 488-9w
Training 735w

Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Religion 401w

Youth services
155w

Youth training
313w, 594-5w, 598w

Youth unemployment
592w
Scotland 592w

Yugoslavia
Armed conflict 124w, 577w, 814-5, 944
Immigration applications 112w
Sanctions 577w, 826
War crimes 494, (01:04:93) 543-8

Zimbabwe
Droughts 117-8w